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*The Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins (I)**

YVOR WINTERS

IT IS MY INTENTION TO BEGIN by comparing three poems, a sonnet by John Donne, a short poem by Robert Bridges, and a sonnet by Gerard Hopkins, and to compare them with reference to a particular theory of poetry. The poems by Donne and Bridges conform to this theory and illustrate it perfectly; the poem by Hopkins deviates sharply and I believe suffers as a result. Hopkins provides an excellent example of deviation, however, for two reasons: in the first place, though his deviation is serious, it is not crude or ridiculous and thus differs from the deviations of many romantic poets before and after, even poets

*This essay was based on the editions of Bridges and of Williams, and was completed some time before the publication of the third edition (*Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, Edited with additional Poems, Notes, and a Biographical Introduction by W. H. Gardiner; 1948; Oxford University Press. The new poems result in a new numbering, although my use of the old numbers should cause no trouble if the reader bears this fact in mind. Gardiner gives a new arrangement of the stanzas of the fragment *On a Piece of Music;* my analysis of this poem is based on the older arrangement and may confuse the reader who has only the new arrangement at hand. I do not see, however, that the new arrangement alters the actual meaning of the poem. The new notes give one or two clues which were not at my disposal as to Hopkins' intentions with regard to the meaning of two or three lines or passages, but these are of very minor importance. The chief value of the new notes resides in the fact that they give us Hopkins' metrical markings for many passages with regard to which we were previously in the dark. We discover, for example, that Hopkins marked the line: *Woe world sorrow, on an age-old anvil wince and sing,* not as I have marked it, with accents on the first three syllables, but with an accent on *world,* and with a slur-sign above *sorrow, on an,* which indicates that these words should have the effect of one unaccented syllable. It seems to me that my own marking is more reasonable and does more for the poem. We learn from another symbol, however, that Hopkins differentiated between the heard stress and the theoretic stress (p. 242); so it is possible that he may have read the poem as I mark it. There is a similar differentiation between theoretic and actual structure involved in the theory of outrides: it is, I believe, indefensible, for meter is the measure of sound (that is, of what we actually hear); it is not an arbitrary parlor-game. The reader should compare Hopkins' marking of the opening of *The Windhover* with my own marking.

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of genius; and in the second place, his gift for language, as far as his procedure will allow it to emerge, appears almost as great as that of Donne or Bridges, so that we may examine with a minimum of distraction the consequences of the deviation itself. The poems of Donne and Bridges deal with closely related themes, under different figures derived from different views of human history; the theme of Hopkins may be similar but is inadequately defined and one cannot be sure.

The theory of poetry may be summarized briefly as follows. A poem is a statement in words, and about a human experience, and it will be successful in so far as it realizes the possibilities of that kind of statement. This sentence may seem childishly obvious, but it states facts of which we must never lose sight if we are to understand poetry, and facts of which sight is very commonly lost. When we are discussing poetry, we should not beguile ourselves with analogies drawn from music, sculpture, architecture, or engineering; a poem is not a symphony, neither is it a structure made of bricks. Words are primarily conceptual; the words *grief, tree, poetry, God,* represent concepts; they may communicate some feeling and remembered sensory impression as well, and they may be made to communicate a great deal of these, but they will do it by virtue of their conceptual identity, and in so far as this identity is impaired they will communicate less of these and communicate them with less force and precision. It is the business of the poet, then, to make a statement in words about an experience; the statement must be in some sense and in a fair measure acceptable rationally; and the feeling communicated should be proper to the rational understanding of the experience.

Poetry has something, however, though relatively little, in common with music; namely, rhythm. Rhythm, with the other elements of sound which may be combined with it—in poetry these other elements are relatively few and simple—is to some extent expressive of emotion, and it may be used to modify the emotional content of language. The value of rhythm is not primarily in its power to intensify emotion, though it has this

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power; it is rather to modulate and define emotion, so that a finer adjustment of emotion to thought may be possible.

The poem thus differs from the statement of the philosopher or scientist in that it is a fairly complete judgment of an experience: it is not merely a rational statement, but it communicates as well the feeling which the particular rational understanding ought to motivate. It differs from the statement of the writer of imaginative prose, in that the poet's language is more precise and more flexible and hence can accomplish more in little space and accomplish it better. But with the development of romantic theory in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, there has been an increasing tendency to suppress the rational in poetry and as far as may be to isolate the emotional. This tendency makes at best for an incomplete poetry and makes at worst for a very confused poetry.

My first poem is by John Donne:

Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?
Repair me now, for now mine end doth haste,
I run to death, and death meets me as fast,
And all my pleasures are like yesterday;
I dare not move my dim eyes any way,
Despair behind and death before doth cast
Such terror, and my feeble flesh doth waste
By sin in it, which it toward hell doth weigh;
Only thou art above, and when toward thee
By thy leave I can look, I rise again;
But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
That not one hour myself I can sustain;
Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art,
And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart.

This poem is simple in conception: the poet looks forward a little way to death and backward on the sins of his life; he is oppressed with his helplessness and prays for God's grace that he may love God, repent, and be saved. The situation is a general one: we

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have an orthodox theological definition of a predicament in which every man is supposed to share; yet the poet knows it to be his own predicament, and the theological proposition becomes a personal experience. The language is plain, but is exact and powerful; it culminates in a pun which makes one of the greatest lines in English poetry.

My second poem, *Low Barometer,* is by Robert Bridges:

The southwind strengthens to a gale,
Across the moon the clouds fly fast,
The house is smitten as with a flail,
The chimney shudders to the blast.

On such a night, when Air has loosed
Its guardian grasp on blood and brain,
Old terrors then of god or ghost
Creep from their caves to life again;

And Reason kens he herits in
A haunted house. Tenants unknown
Assert their squalid lease of sin
With earlier title than his own.

Unbodied presences, the pack'd
Pollution and Remorse of Time,
Slipped from oblivion reënact
The horrors of unhouseled crime.

Some men would quell the thing with prayer
Whose sightless footsteps pad the floor,
Whose fearful trespass mounts the stair
Or bursts the lock'd forbidden door.

Some have seen corpses long interr'd
Escape from hallowing control,
Pale charnel forms—nay ev'n have heard
The shrilling of a troubled soul,

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That wanders till the dawn hath cross'd
The dolorous dark, or Earth hath wound
Closer her storm-spredd cloke, and thrust
The baleful phantoms underground.

The theme of this poem, as I have said, is similar to the theme of the sonnet by Donne. Donne sees man as fallen from Grace and evicted from paradise, and as capable of salvation only through a return of Grace as an aid to his own imperfect ability; though he does not say so in this poem, his system depends in part on the right use of Reason, though Reason without Grace is insufficient, and the poem is a prayer for Grace. Bridges sees man as risen from brutality and as governed precariously by Reason. Both poets deal with man's unequal struggle with his lower nature, and with what we may call either literally or figuratively the effect of Original Sin. Bridges, like Donne, feels the need for supernatural aid in addition to Reason; unlike Donne, he cannot state this need directly and in theological language, for he is not a Christian, but he implies it in his figurative use of Air; "... when Air has loosed / Its guardian grasp on blood and brain." Through the figure of the storm, he indicates supernatural violence; as a result of the storm, the steady force of the air, like the pressure of water on submarine life, is relaxed, and man's nature is unbalanced, and man sees corpses "Escape from hallowing control"; Reason is overwhelmed by the ancient and powerful demonic forces in its fleshly habitation. This poem, like Donne's, deals with a common predicament; unlike Donne's, the poem does not profess to deal with a personal experience. Both poems deal with the experience in the most general of terms: Donne's despair, death, and sin could hardly be more general, but they are definite, for they have a body of theology behind them, and we know what they include and why Donne feels as he does; Bridges, without such a corpus of theology for direct reference, must limit his statement further:

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Unbodied presences, the pack'd
Pollution and Remorse of Time,
Slipped from oblivion reënact
The horrors of unhouseled crime.

These lines are the culmination of his account of sin as the sub-human, the archaic, and the chaotic; he is forced to greater particularity here than Donne, and he achieves greater power, but the statement is nevertheless general and very inclusive. What I wish to call to the attention at present is this: that though both poems are generalized, they are precise; that there is a great difference between generalization and uncertainty.

Let us now consider the sonnet by Hopkins:

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing—
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked 'No ling-
ering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.'

O the mind, mind has mountains: cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne'er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

This poem differs from the two preceding in that it deals primarily with a particular and personal experience; the difficulty consists in the fact that there is so little generalization that we can feel no certainty regarding the nature of the experience beyond the fact that it has generated a desperate emotion. This is not a poem about the effects of violent emotion in general; it is a poem about a particular violent emotion experienced by the

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poet. The nearest thing to a statement of motive occurs in the first line and a half of the sestet; but what are these mountains of the mind? One does not enquire because one holds them cheap, but because one has hung on so many oneself, so various in their respective terrors, that one is perplexed to assign a particular motive. One is inclined to ask: "What do you know of these matters? Why are you so secretive? And above all, why are you so self-righteous in your secretiveness?" Hopkins' modern admirers have often assumed that the poem deals with a struggle to maintain what they consider an irrational and unwholesome faith, that it deals with the self-inflicted torture of the religious. There is nothing in the poem either to prove or to disprove the idea of such a struggle. The emotion might result from such a struggle, might result as in Donne's sonnet from a sense of sin either general or particular or both and for the need of Grace, from the contemplation of any of several metaphysical propositions, from the death of a friend, from betrayal by a friend, from the desperation of personal loneliness, from a mixture of some of these, or from something else. We have passed beyond the limits of generalization; we are in the realm of uncertainty; and the mind cannot organize itself to share Hopkins' experience with any real feeling of security.

It is interesting to observe the manner in which he achieves a part of the precision he needs, a small part which is managed with such skill that it gives a brief illusion of a great part, in the use of metaphor. Take, for example, his most brilliant phrase: "on an age-old anvil wince and sing—." The anvil is presumably God's discipline, and on it lies the poet as a piece of metal. The two verbs, the first with its sense of human suffering combined with metallic vibration, the second with its sense of metallic vibration combined perhaps with human triumph, make the metal suffer as metal under the hammer, and the suffering metal is terribly vivid. We suffer with the metal under the blow, and we forget that the literal metal does not suffer, that metal and blow are figurative, and that the human half of the figure is incomplete. Thus the poet conveys emotion for a moment, and

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conveys it with an illusion of motivation but with no real motivation. If the mountains of the mind were adequately identified, Hopkins' figure would have a power comparable to that of Donne's last line; but Donne's line has meaning, and Hopkins' figure the illusion of meaning.

The meter of the poem contributes to the difficulty, or at least emphasizes it. Hopkins' published explanation of his meter is incomplete and contradictory, and will help us only a little to understand his work. I will consider it in some detail presently, but for the moment I would like to give my own definition of sprung rhythm, which agrees only in part with that of Hopkins, and then proceed to an examination of the meter of the present sonnet. Sprung rhythm occurs when two stresses come together by means other than the normal inversion of a foot; it occurs freely in accentual meter and in syllabic meter; it may occur as a variant in standard English meter as a result of the dropping of an unaccented syllable with the resultant creation of a monosyllabic foot, or as a result of the equally heavy accentuation of both syllables of a foot. For example, when Barnaby Googe writes in an iambic pentameter poem: "Fair face show friends when riches do abound," the first two feet are sprung. It is most profitable, I think, to approach the sonnet under consideration as a variant on iambic pentameter, using Hopkins' remarks as occasional guides. I shall offer a scansion of the poem, with alternative readings of certain lines, and shall then comment on the scansion:

1. *No* worst/ *there* is/ *none.* Pitched/ *past* pitch/ *of* grief/,
   No *worst*/
2. More *pangs*/ will, *schooled*/ *at* fore/*pangs* wild/*er* wring/.
3. Com*fort*/*er* where/ where *is*/ *your* com/*fort*ing/?
4. Mar*y*/, moth*er*/ of *us*/ where *is*/ *your re*lief/?
5. *My* cries/ *heave,* herds/*-long;* hud/*dle in a* main/, *a* chief/
   (*My*) cries *heave*/ herds-*long*/; hud*dle*/ *in a* main/, *a* chief/
6. Woe, world sor/(*row*); *on an* age/*-old* an/*vil* wince/ *and* sing/—
   Woe, world sor/*row; on an* age/

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7. *Then* lull/, *then* leave/ *off*. Fu/*ry had* shrieked/ '*No* ling/-
8. *er*ing/! Let *me*/ *be* fell/: force *I*/ *must be* brief/.'
9. O *the* mind/, mind/ *has* mount/*ains*: cliffs/ *of* fall/
10. Fright*ful*/, sheer/, no-*man-fath/omed*. Hold/ *them* cheap/
11. May *who*/ *ne'er* hung/ *there*. Nor/ *does* long/ *our* small/
    May *who ne'er*/ hung *there*/. Nor *does*/ long/ *our* small/
12. Du*rance*/ deal *with*/ that steep/ *or* deep/. Here! Creep/,
13. Wretch, *un/der a* com/*fort* serves/ *in a* whirl/*wind:* all/
14. *Life* death/ *does* end/ *and* each/ *day* dies/ *with* sleep/.

The first line is normal, unless we read the first foot as reversed; in either version it defines the pattern. In the second line, the first two feet are reversed, and the last three are normal; the reversal of the second foot is unusual, as Hopkins says in his preface, and is the first indication of the violence to follow. In the third line the first and third feet are reversed and the rest normal, this being a more ordinary arrangement. The fourth line is composed of four reversed feet and a normal trisyllabic foot, the first four feet giving us what Hopkins calls counterpoint, or a heard rhythm running counter to the remembered norm. The fifth line may be scanned in either of two ways: as composed of four iambic feet (the first three and the fifth), with the fourth foot reduced to three syllables by the elision of *huddle* and *in;* or with *My* regarded as extra-metrical, a violent procedure from the standpoint of the ordinary metrist, but defensible in Hopkins's system of lines which are "rove over," and thereafter three reversed feet, a normal trisyllabic foot, and a normal dissyllabic. The two readings may be regarded as a case of counterpoint, perhaps, the first giving the theoretic norm and the second the heard rhythm. In regard to this and other elisions, real or possible, in Hopkins, one may suggest that Hopkins may have had a notion comparable to that of Bridges, whereby elision takes place for the eye and so pays its respects to regularity but does not take place for the ear: his elisions, or possible elisions, in any event, are usually preferable if seen but not heard. The sixth line con-

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tains seven inescapable accents, and so eliminates any possibility that the poem be scanned as regular accentual meter. I should be inclined to call the first three syllables, all of which are accented, a single sprung foot, of the same sort employed by Googe in dissyllabic units when he wrote, "Fair face show friends." I am acquainted with no poet save Hopkins who has used a sprung foot of three syllables, but the sprung foot of two syllables, employed as a variation on standard English meter, is fairly common in the sixteenth century. The second syllable of *sorrow* may then be regarded as extra-metrical, the position of the extra-metrical syllable before the caesura instead of at the line-end being natural enough in a system in which the line-end need not involve a pause and in which the caesural break may be heavy, that is in a system of lines which are "rove over," as I have said; or *sorrow* may be elided with *on;* thereafter we have a normal trisyllabic foot followed by two normal dissyllabics. The seventh line is simple except for the termination in mid-word, a procedure justified by Hopkins' theory and successful use of "rove-over" rhythm, and for which classical—and even, in a measure, Miltonic—precedent can be found if it is wanted; the fourth foot of this line is a normal trisyllabic, the others are normal dissyllabics. The eighth line contains an inverted foot in the difficult second position and another in the fourth, and for the rest contains two normal dissyllabics and a final normal trisyllabic, and thus brings the octet back more or less obviously to the iambic pentameter pattern.

In the ninth line, we have a trisyllabic, a monosyllabic, and three dissyllabics, the accents falling normally. The monosyllabic foot, as a method of achieving sprung rhythm, has, like the sprung dissyllabic, its precedents in the sixteenth century. It occurs in some of the poems of Wyatt which are based on a ten-syllable norm, and it occurs in some of the seven-syllable couplets of Greene: the reader may examine specimens of both, if he is curious, in *The Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse.* In line ten we have an inverted dissyllabic, a monosyllabic, an inverted trisyllabic, and two normal dissyllabics. In the eleventh

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line we may read five dissyllabics, the first only being inverted; or we may read an inverted trisyllabic followed by two inverted dissyllabics, a monosyllabic, and a normal dissyllabic; the first reading giving the theoretic norm and the second the heard rhythm, with another example of Hopkins' counterpoint as the result. The twelfth line consists of two inverted dissyllabics, a sprung dissyllabic, a normal dissyllabic, and a sprung dissyllabic, to give us another line of seven accents. The thirteenth line consists of an inverted dissyllabic, a normal trisyllabic, a normal dissyllabic, a normal trisyllabic, and a normal dissyllabic. The last line consists of five normal dissyllabics, although the long syllables in the first and fourth feet almost give the illusion of sprung feet: this line returns to the original pattern, yet echoes some of the more violent variations.

The poem, then, is not written in syllabic meter, for the number of syllables varies from line to line; if it is an attempt at accentual meter, it is irregular, for two lines contain extra accents. But it can be described, and without undue trouble, as a variant on standard English meter, a variant both learned and perverse but in which the rhythm is successfully maintained, in which the perversity is equalled by the skill.

Skill to what purpose, however? The rhythm is fascinating in itself, but it does not exist in itself, it exists in the poem. It is a rhythm based on the principle of violent struggle with its governing measure, and it contributes to the violence of feeling in the total poem. But it is this very violence which makes us question the motive, and I think one may add that the violence is in some degree the result of the inadequacy of the motive. When Bridges writes:

> *Unbodied presences, the packed*
> *Pollution and Remorse of Time,*
> *Slipped from oblivion reënact*
> *The horrors of unhouseled crime,*

he is making a statement about human nature which is true and

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important; the concept and all its implications are clear; and he can make his statement quietly, for he knows that we should recognize its importance and be moved appropriately. I do not mean that the importance of the concept absolves him from the necessity of deliberately communicating the appropriate emotion, and in this passage the emotional weight of the language is great; I mean that his statement has the dignity of conviction. Hopkins has no such generating concept, or at least offers none; since he cannot move us by telling us why he himself is moved, he must try to move us by belaboring his emotion. He says, in effect: "Share my fearful emotion, for the human mind is subject to fearful emotions." But why should we wish to share an emotion so ill sponsored? Nothing could be more rash. We cannot avoid sharing a part of it, for Hopkins has both skill and genius; but we cannot avoid being confused by the experience and suspecting in it a fine shade of the ludicrous. Who is this man to lead us so far and blindfold into violence? This kind of thing is a violation of our integrity; it is somewhat beneath the dignity of man.

II

I have already indicated the most important general problem raised by Hopkins' meter, the problem of emotional overemphasis. My actual scansion of the poem in question, however, is one of which Hopkins might or might not have approved, although I suspect that he would have accepted it as reasonable. Before we can deal with Hopkins' meter in general, or at least with reference to his more curious and experimental structures, we must look at his own remarks, for the more difficult poems certainly cannot be scanned as variants on the iambic structure. There are two important documents: *Rhythm and Other Structural Parts of Rhetoric—Verse,* in *The Notebooks and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins,* a discussion which is merely a general survey of his speculations on the topic but which gives a fair idea of where his mind had roamed and paused, and the *Author's Preface* to the *Poems,* which was written as an explanation of his actual practice. The former document is only of incidental,

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though sometimes of real, interest: for example, in my own scansion of the sonnet which I have already discussed, I have indicated a foot of three accented syllables at the beginning of line six, and have noted that this resembles similar feet of two accented syllables which one can find in such Renaissance models as Googe and Nashe, but outdoes them; but Hopkins in the document mentioned lists the Greek *molossus,* or foot of three long syllables, among the various Greek constructions, and since he was aware that English feet resembled certain Greek feet if accent were substituted for length, and since he was all but obsessed with metrical theories of every kind, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he would attempt an English molossus if he were employing a metrical scheme which would at once sustain it and make it recognizable.

The *Author's Preface,* however, was written as an explanation of what Hopkins had actually done. It is unsatisfactory, but we must examine it briefly and point by point. Hopkins begins by naming two kinds of meter, Running and Sprung. The former he identifies with standard English meter; the latter he describes farther on. He states that Running rhythm may be more easily scanned if any unaccented syllable at the beginning of the line be regarded either as carried over from the preceding line or as extra-metrical, so that the accent will always fall in the first place in the foot. It seems obvious to me that such a system of scansion would introduce more difficulties than it would eliminate and further that it would disregard the natural genius of English rhythm. In the following paragraph, however, he proceeds to speak of standard English verse as if he had not made this suggestion: his discussion of reversed feet and of counterpoint rhythm rests on a recognition of the reality of iambic and anapestic feet, and he does not account in any way for this sudden change of theory. One does not know, therefore, how he prefers his own poems to be scanned, and one can only use what judgment one has with the individual poem.

He next takes up Sprung Rhythm, and he offers two distinct definitions for it. First, he says: "Sprung Rhythm, as used in this

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book, is measured by feet of from one to four syllables, regularly, and for particular effects any number of weak or slack syllables may be used. It [he refers here to the individual foot] has one stress, which falls on the only syllable, if there is only one, or, if there are more, then scanning as above, on the first, and so gives rise to four sorts of feet, a monosyllable and the so-called accentual Trochee, Dactyl, and the First Paeon. And there will be four corresponding natural rhythms; but nominally the feet are mixed, and any one may follow any other." He adds that it will be natural in this rhythm for the lines to be *rove over,* "that is for the scanning of each line immediately to take up that of the one before, so that if the first has one or more syllables at its end the other must have so many the less at its beginning." This is partly a description of the way in which his own poems tend to move with little or no pause at the ends of lines, and it is partly a formal necessity, for if each foot is to start with an accented syllable, there must be some way to account for unaccented syllables when they occur at the beginning of a line, and the obvious method is to assign them to the last foot of the line preceding. What we have here, briefly, is a description of ordinary accentual verse, which commonly shall have a maximum of three unaccented syllables between accents, but which may sometimes have more. Near the end of the *Preface,* however, Hopkins remarks of certain old popular rimes and their modification by time, "however these may have been once made in running rhythm, the terminations having dropped off by the change of language, the stresses come together and so the rhythm is sprung." Here it appears that Sprung Rhythm is identified by the juxtaposition of stresses, and that we may have juxtaposition of stresses in meter other than accentual. For clarity of discussion, I shall use the term *Sprung Rhythm,* as I have used it in the past, to refer to rhythm in which two or more stresses come together, except where this occurs in standard English meter through the mere inversion of a foot.

Of Sprung Rhythm (apparently in either sense), Hopkins says: "Two licenses are natural to Sprung Rhythm. The one is

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rests, as in music; but of this an example is scarcely to be found in this book, unless in the *Echoes,* second line. The other is *hangers* or *outrides,* that is one, two, or three slack syllables added to a foot and not counting in the nominal scanning. They are so called because they seem to hang below the line or ride forward or backward from it in another dimension than the line itself, according to a principle needless to explain here." This comment is characteristic. As to *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo,* it is metrically one of the most difficult of Hopkins' poems, and I believe that there is no way of being certain what the pattern is, if there is indeed a fixed one; there is one insurmountable obstacle to certainty in this matter with regard to all the more difficult specimens, an obstacle which I shall presently discuss. And Hopkins himself appears uncertain as to whether there is a "rest" in the second line. As to *hangers* or *outrides,* he finds it needless to explain their principle; and it is hard to see how so many as six unaccented syllables could be attached to an accented syllable without confusion.

Hopkins cites Greene as having practiced Sprung Rhythm. The Sprung Rhythm which Greene practiced, however, can be classified properly as such according to my definition and to Hopkins' second, but not according to Hopkins' first. Greene's Sprung Rhythm occurs as a variant on standard English meter, when he drops an unaccented syllable, thus bringing two accented syllables together. The following passage, for example, comes from a poem written in ordinary couplets of seven-syllable lines:

> *Up I start, forth went I,*
> *With her face to feed mine eye. . . .*

Many similar lines can be found in Greene whenever he uses this form. I should judge that Hopkins must have had such lines by Greene in mind when he was writing his *Lines for a Picture of St. Dorothea* (Number 82, an early version of Number 1, *For a Picture of St. Dorothea*). I quote the first stanza, with the accents as given in the published text:

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I bear a basket lined with grass.
I' am só light' and fair'
Men are amazed to watch me pass
With' the bá'sket I bear',
Which in newly drawn green litter
Carries treats of sweet for bitter.

The meter of Hopkins' second line corresponds exactly to the meter of the first line quoted from Greene, and so does the meter of Hopkins' fourth if one reads the stress that is almost forced on the second syllable of *basket* in spite of its not having been indicated. But there is this difference: Greene's meter is based on the natural stress of the language and is plainly evident without artificial help, whereas no one would suspect the intentions of Hopkins if he had not marked the lines. A structure which is based on so willful a deformation of the language is indefensible, and it will often be grotesque, as it is here; yet Hopkins' more elaborate experiments often depend upon deformation equally fantastic, and the more elaborate structures make his intentions all but indecipherable.

The poem called *Spring and Fall* (Number 31) shows similar deformations in a comparably simple meter; and interestingly enough, most of the deformed lines are pleasanter, though less regular, if read in the normal rhythm of the language. The real difficulty inherent in such deformation, however, is apparent when we consider some of the more difficult poems. G. F. Lahey, for example,* gives a scansion of *The Windhover*, of which I shall offer only the first four lines. I do not know whether Lahey's scansion is merely a personal hypothesis or whether it is based on markings in a Hopkins ms. It does not correspond with the markings copied for me by a friend from one ms. version of the poem. I shall leave the unaccented syllables in italics and indicate the feet with cross-bars:

*G. F. Lahey, *Gerard Manley Hopkins*, Oxford, 1930, pp. 103-4.

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I caught/ *this* morn/*ing* morn/*ing's* min/*ion,* king/-
dom *of daylight's*/ dau*phin*/, dap*ple-dawn-drawn*/
Fal*con, in his*/ rid*ing*/
Of *the rolling*/ lev*el under*/neath *him steady*/ air
and/ stri*ding*/
High *there, how he*/ rung *upon the*/ rein *of a*/ wimp*ling*/
wing/.

Some of the difficulty in this reading can be eliminated if we pay more attention to Hopkins' theory of "rove-over" lines. That is, unless Hopkins is the ultimate authority for this reading, it would be better to put the first accents of lines three and four on *daylight's* and *rolling* respectively, and to consider the unaccented syllables preceding as parts of the last feet of lines one and two. However, the difficulties do not stop there. As nearly as I am able to pronounce the English language, the normal accentuation of these lines would proceed as follows:

I caught *this* morn*ing* morn*ing's* min*ion,* king-
dom of day*light's* dauph*in* dap*ple*-dawn-*drawn*
Fal*con, in his* rid*ing*
Of the roll*ing* lev*el* und*er*neath *him* stead*y* air, *and*
stri*ding*
High *there, how he* rung *upon the* rein *of a* wimp*ling*
wing.

Furthermore, I submit that this reading gives a better rhythm, in spite of the irregularity of meter (five accents in line one, six in two, seven in three, and six in four). On the other hand, if Lahey's version is defensible with regard to such feet as these—*dom* of daylight's, *Of* the rolling, *neath* him steady—then how are we to know that we should not read likewise: *caught* this morning, *morn*ing's minion? The presence of the unaccented syllable at the beginning of the line provides no obstacle, for Hopkins could easily have regarded it as extra-metrical; and these deformations are of exactly the same kind as those offered by Lahey and in fact are more conservative than some of Lahey's. If Lahey's reading is authoritative, then Hopkins expects us to

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change from normal accentuation to deformed accentuation merely at his own whim, and with no kind of warning, and his own markings of certain poems support this theory. Merely as a technical procedure, this is all but impossible; and if one manages to work it out one gets a mispronunciation of the language which renders the poem ludicrous. In the sonnet which I have already scanned according to my own lights, we found a meter which was very unusual, but which was at the same time comprehensible and pronounceable; its deviations from normal English meter, though made in the interests of an obscurely violent emotion, were structurally both learned and controlled. In *The Windhover,* however, the attempt to express violent emotion through violent meter has got out of hand and become merely preposterous. Lahey adds to this confusion when he tells us* that *dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon in his* represent "outrides" or "hangers," though according to his own scansion they do not.

The Windhover is characteristic of Hopkins' more difficult metrical experiments, although it is not one of the most difficult. Other poems which exhibit a similarly confused meter are the following: *The Wreck of the Deutschland, The Starlight Night, Duns Scotus's Oxford, Henry Purcell, The Bugler's First Communion, Spelt from the Sibyl's Leaves, The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo, To What Serves Mortal Beauty, The Soldier, Carrion Comfort,* and *That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire.* There is a good deal of difference in the degree of difficulty among these poems, and there are other poems which exhibit the difficulty. Some of the difficult poems, however, may be read with a fairly satisfactory rhythm, though with irregular meter, if Hopkins' theories are forgotten, although this is a melancholy compromise if one assumes that the poet really meant something by his rhythm.

Mr. Harold Whitehall, in one of the most interesting studies of Hopkins' meter which I have read†, constructs a theory of his

* Ibid p. 94.

† *Sprung Rhythm,* by Harold Whitehall, pp. 28-54 of *Gerard Manley Hopkins,* by the Kenyon Critics, New Directions, 1945.

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own on the fragmentary basis left by Hopkins. His theory, briefly and incompletely, is that Hopkins, without realizing it, was composing dipodic meter, or meter in double feet, of the sort described by Patmore, but was using this medium so freely and variously that Patmore did not recognize the results when he saw them. Put thus baldly, the theory may seem a trifle innocent, but actually Mr. Whitehall makes a fairly good case. I am not interested, however, either in attacking or in defending his theory, for in explaining his theory he makes the one admission which, in my opinion, renders his theory worthless as a defense of Hopkins' procedure, in spite of the fact that his theory may conceivably offer a true description of the procedure. He says:

> His sprung rhythm must be read as we read the words of a song when we happen to know the tune. If we do not know the tune — and Hopkins never furnishes it — the words may become, and in print frequently do become, a meaningless jumble of syllables.

But the "tune" of a poem is supposed to be constructed from the living material of the language, not imposed upon it arbitrarily, and Mr. Whitehall is here admitting the defect which I have already described, though he scarcely seems to recognize it as a defect. The double foot is composed of a major stress and a minor stress, and may have one or two unaccented syllables; it may be combined with the monosyllabic foot, especially when this falls in the last position. What one might call the classical form of the double foot is Hopkins' First Paeon, with the major stress on the first syllable and the minor on the third. A word employed by Mr. Whitehall will illustrate it: *Honeysuckle.* I will mark the scansion, on this basis, of two lines employed by Mr. Whitehall, the first from Alfred Noyes, the second from John Masefield, but will employ a simpler marking than his, one which merely indicates the major and minor accents and the feet. The double accent will indicate the major stress, the single accent the minor:

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Mŭsic óf the/ stărlíght/ shĭmmering ón the/ sĕa . . .
Săndalwóod,/ cĕdarwóod, and/ swĕet white/ wĭne . . .

The double feet in these lines are real: that is, the poets have chosen their words in such a fashion that clearly recognizable light accents follow clearly recognizable heavy, in a rhythmic pattern which is unmistakable. That this is not, however, the basic pattern of English verse, as Patmore (and I should add Mr. Whitehall with him) would seem to think, one may see readily enough from a brief examination of the following lines:

Of Măn's/ first dĭs/obĕ/dience ănd/ the frŭit/
Of thăt/ forbĭd/den trĕe/ whose mŏr/tal tăste/
Brought dĕath/ ĭnto/ the wŏrld/ and ăll/ our wŏe/. . .

If we regard the first syllable of the first line as extrametrical, we may arrange the feet of this line so that they resemble the feet of Masefield and of Noyes, but we shall be forcing the rhythm and ruining the line; the next two lines cannot be so arranged except by the most arbitrary of accentuation, which will render them ludicrous. The principle which is operating in these lines is different, therefore, from that which we found in the lines preceding. For purposes of the measure, only two kinds of syllable are recognized, the accented and the unaccented; the accented is recognized as such only with reference to the other syllable or syllables within its own foot; and different degrees of accent, since they do not affect the measure, can be infinitely variable and thus contribute to a flexible and perceptive rhythm; the poet is not bound to a simple drum-beat, he can write poetry instead of jingles. When Mr. Whitehall states that standard English meter is largely theoretical and does not lend itself to vocal reading, I can only think that he himself knows very little about the reading of verse.

Hopkins, however, is less simple than Noyes and Masefield. I will offer a few lines from Hopkins with Whitehall's accentuation:

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Éarnest, éarthless,/ équal, attúneable,/ váulty,
volúminous,/ stupéndous/

In this line nothing save forewarning of some kind can indicate that the heavy accents are heavier than the light; so long as one regards the language as it really exists, all of the stresses are equal, and their equality is emphasized by the grammatical parallels: the meter as indicated is a pure fiction. Whitehall runs into even greater difficulty with another line from the same poem:

Her/ fónd yellow hórnlight/ wóund to the wést, her/
wíld hollow hóarlight/ húng to the héight./

The heavy and light accentuation is equally arbitrary here, and there is the additional confusion that the first syllables of *yellow* and *hollow,* which have a legitimate right to light accent marks, cannot be given them. The reader coming to this line with no previous theory except the realization that there were two kinds of accent involved, would inescapably mark these two syllables as light and every one of Mr. Whitehall's accented syllables as heavy.

We may observe the same kind of accentuation in the conclusion of *The Lantern out of Doors,* which I offer as accented by Hopkins himself according to the published text:

Christ minds; Christ's interest, what to avow or amend
There, éyes them, heart wánts, care háunts, foot
fóllows kínd,
Their ránsom, théir rescue / ánd first, fást, last friend.

In the light of such scansion, it is curious to read this passage in one of Hopkins' letters to Bridges:

> Why do I employ sprung rhythm at all? Because it is the nearest to the rhythm of prose, that is the native and natural rhythm of speech, the least forced, the most rhetorical and emphatic of all possible rhythms.

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It is even more curious to read the following comment upon this passage by so able a critic as Arthur Mizener:

> However much Hopkins crowded a sentence with repetitions, it never lost the cadence of actual speech; the sound of the voice speaking it is always there in the reader's ear to give the poems their incomparable immediacy.*

It is this kind of thing which often makes poetry and the criticism of poetry in our day so baffling a study.

What we have in Hopkins' more difficult constructions, then, is a very complex accentual meter, in which the accents are for the most part the irresponsible inventions of the author rather than native elements of the language, and in which in addition we have "hangers" or "outrides," that is, groups of syllables which may or may not seem to the unassisted reader to have the characteristics of feet, and which are not to be counted in the scansion. Unless we have the author's marking to guide us or are willing to accept on faith the marking of some other authority, we commonly have no way of determining the scansion; and when we have such marking (and this is quite as true of Hopkins' own as of any other), we frequently find ourselves forced into deformations of language which are nearly unpronounceable and are often ridiculous. This metrical method, moreover, is devised in the interest of intensifying an emotion which is frequently unmotivated or inadequately motivated within the terms of the poem. It seems to me obvious that the poems so constructed should be regarded as ruins rather than masterpieces, whatever impressive fragments there may be lying loose among them; and furthermore that defensive explanation is quite foolish. Bridges has been repeatedly rebuked for failing to understand what Hopkins was doing. I am inclined to believe that Bridges understood as much as was necessary, and that the real failure was on the part of Hopkins.

(*To be concluded in the next issue*)

* *Letters to Bridges*, p. 46. Arthur Mizener in *The Kenyon Critics*, p. 108.

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Three Letters

(*In memory of my mother*)

W. S. GRAHAM

TO MY BROTHER

Alistair, approach this thirty
Lines with a homing memory.
Each step speaks out the springtime.
Our Clydeside merges home.

The morning rises up.
The sun's enamoured step
Crosses the ancient firth.
Your breath crosses my breath.

The sun's encouraged step,
The released word's escape,
Enters the bright bright world
Held in the helmet head.

The firth makes light of us
Exchanged on those waters
Between Gareloch and Greenock
Wearing woodshell and rowlock.

All on this emerged morning
Between banks of shipbuilding
The distilled and hurtled out
Industry of mind and heart

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Floats us from hammer yards
Twin measures of these words.
Foreseen secretly by
Violence or strawdeath eye

As the cairns move against
The natural sea-mist,
We sail for ever the authorities
Of a changed firth's waters.

I let thirty lines loose.
These words make light of us.

TO MY FATHER

Yes as alike as entirely
You my father I see
That high Greenock tenement
And whole shipyarded front.

As alike as a memory early
Of "The Bonny Earl o' Moray"
Fiddled in our high kitchen
Over the sleeping town

These words this one night
Feed us and will not
Leave us without our natures
Inheriting new fires.

Author's Note: *Strawdeath.* It is still common in Scottish speech to allude to an ignominious death as opposed to a violent or heroic death as 'strawdeath' or 'straedeath.' A remark passed on hearing of the news of a miner being killed in the pit violently might be, 'at least he didna get a straedeath anyhow.'

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The March whinfires let fall
From the high Greenock hill
A word fetched so bright
Out of the forehead that

A fraction's wink and I
And my death change round softly.
My birth and I so softly
Change round the outward journey.

Entirely within the fires
And winter-harried natures
Of your each year, the still
Foundered man is the oracle

Tented within his early
Friendships. And he'll reply
To us locked in our song.
This night this word falling

Across the kindling skies
Takes over over our bodies.

TO MY MOTHER

Under (not ground but the mind's)
Thunder you rest on memory's
Daily aloneness as rest
My steps to a great past.

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My memory saves its breath.
Its flowing stronghold with
Crowds of the day and night
Changes them each heartbeat.

In words I change them further
Away from the parent fire.
Look. Into life or out?
What son did you inherit?

The flowing strongheld Clyde
Rests me my livedlong word
That has ever matchlessly
Changed me towards the sea.

That deep investment speaks
Over shipcradles and derricks
And ebbs to a perfection's
Deadly still anatomies.

Sometimes like loneliness
Memory's crowds increase.
Suddenly some man I am
So finds himself endless stream

Of stepping away from his
Last home, I crave my ease
Stopped for a second dead
Out of the speaking flood.

Under (not ground but the words)
You rest with speaking hordes.

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Baker Street to Eccles Street: The Odyssey of a Myth

HUGH KENNER

THE PARTNERSHIP OF SHERLOCK HOLMES AND DR. WATSON is the most significant sub-aesthetic phenomenon of the late nineteenth century. Only Alice's tumble into a Freudian womb-world through a rabbit-hole can be said to merit comparable attention. Both are psychological myths, the emphasis of the former political and of the latter ethical; both incorporate, in a way that has satisfied millions of readers, the dominant metaphors of an age; to document their connections with their Joycean analogues is to assess conclusively the comprehensiveness of the synthesis achieved by Joyce. What *Alice* had sketched in symbolism both diffident and opaque, *Finnegans Wake* drags mockingly into the light; what Conan Doyle had projected as a cathartic fiction for a perplexity both amiable and representative, *Ulysses* raises to plenary intelligibility. This latter statement is the theme of the present essay.

The unabated popularity of the Holmes-Watson saga at the middlebrow level is one of the most cogent proofs of the continuity of sensibility between the preceding century and the present. It is not without significance that a vast apparatus of Holmesian pseudo-scholarship has sprung up, not always securely tongue-in-cheek, investigating the evidence for Doctor Watson's second marriage, for Holmes' revolver marksmanship, for the identification of "Birlstone Manor" with Brambletye House near Forest Row, with all the gusto of a Professor Kain cataloguing 19 references to be filed under "Bloom, Leopold—Fastidiousness."

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For the highbrow his *Ulysses*, for the middlebrow his Holmes. The reason for indicating these connections is simple. They provide criteria for assessing the inclusive validity of Joyce's epic. The Baker Street stories, like every apparently original development in sub-aesthetic fiction, represent a personal mythology: that is, a cathartic projection into fable of the author's confusions. The projection is neither aesthetically organized nor morally judged; but its popularity signals the way in which it has, for many readers, achieved a satisfactory inclusiveness. Doyle simply coped with the increasingly perplexing split that plagued his times, between states of mind represented by the virtuous citizen and the brilliant outlaw, by projecting them as separate men and uniting them in gratuitous friendship. The point for the Joycean is that Holmes and Watson correspond to Stephen and Bloom; their projection as symbols of opposing moral worlds achieved by Joyce with documented conscious objectivity, and their ultimate relationship contemplated in the light of moral criteria so thoroughly transcending Doyle's sentimentality as to make the import of *Ulysses* a horror from which the middlebrow critic has with consistent wilfulness shied away.

Now the confusion of standards that begat Holmes and Watson was a political confusion, rooted in human associations and human actions; so that the Holmesian myth is a political myth, like the myth of Typhon or the myth of Prometheus. To perceive this fact is to perceive something on which a digression is allowable: a political level, indeed a dominant political level, in the achievement of *Ulysses*.

Despite the maturity of his terrifying perceptivity between 1914 and 1939, Joyce has acquired the dubious reputation of being the most unpolitical of men: apparently because he never wrote about the Class Struggle or Female Suffrage. This misconception, a consequence of which has been the easy rejection of *Ulysses* and *Finnegan* as caviar to the barricaded politico, arises primarily from the Marxist rejection of the hierarchy, which Joyce respected, descending to politics via morals from metaphysics. Since contemporary political argument, whenever vocal,

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proceeds at least unconsciously from Marxist premises, the critic who looks in vain for social relevance in the work of Joyce has no right to scoff, as he frequently does on a different plane, at the Soviet Cultural Censorship disciplining undialectical musicians. The politics in *Ulysses* are grounded on the moral analysis, and the morals in turn on the metaphysical bed-rock. By obeying European tradition rather than Marxian impetuosity, Joyce achieves not only great aesthetic compression, but a solidly-documented, un-doctrinaire political perception. Hence one's case against the social-consciousness fanatic need not rest merely on the League of Nations parody on page 302.

The point may be stated in this way. Politics at the level of the Marxist analysis is thoroughly abstract; it is a historical fact that Marx's interest in the dialectics of society was an accidental deflection of his original interest in rewriting Hegel à la Feuerbach. Marx started on his political career not from a compulsive interest in human actions but through an Olympian determination to find a "law". The result was that he simply transferred to the dynamics of society metaphors taken from the dynamics of matter ("As values, all commodities are nothing but particular masses of congealed labour-time"). Hence the dominant Marxist metaphors sound much more appropriate to the kinetic theory of gases than to any account of human associations; and activities of a human person would be traced through the Marxian bolus by something analogous to The Dynamics of a Particle. That is why the Marxian postulates have been so congenial to technological civilization as to underlie every plea for the rights of "free enterprise".

Marx has no social doctrine. He was no social theorist. He was a low-grade artist making metaphorical connections. Hence to say that the politics of Marx were a by-product of his metaphysical speculation is not to say that his politics, in any Aristotelian sense, is grounded in metaphysics. (It is this confusion that has rendered Ezra Pound, who started from a similar diagnosis of the political thought of his contemporaries, so wilfully anti-Aristotelian). Marx has no metaphysics and hence no

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politics. The difference may be seen by examining the dominant medieval political metaphor of the belly and the members: the Body Politic. To conceive of the Body Politic is to conceive of the state as a larger person to which personal moral categories and sanctions are applicable; it is therefore to insist that before politics can be set in order, morals must be settled first. And the analogy cuts backwards as well as forwards. If politics is analogous to morals, then morals must be analogous to politics: must involve a right relation of man to some other personal entity, as politics involves a right relation of man to the Body Politic. Morals, that is, places man before God, which is to say, in a metaphysical context.

This is a way of indicating the homogeneity which metaphors not only symptomize but enforce in speculative practice. It indicates also the central social position of the artist, who contemplates a civilization for its obsessive metaphors, and renders these intelligible in works designed for analogous contemplation. It follows that if his society is intrinsically sub-human, the most accomplished artist, unless he brings with him a set of rational external sanctions, will be crippled in assessing its metaphors, though he will have no difficulty in discovering and projecting them. We have indicated how this applies to Doyle; in line with the Marxian analysis above, it may be more conveniently demonstrated in the Russian film *The Battleship Potemkin,* a characteristic early achievement of the superbly talented Soviet director Eisenstein. Eisenstein's choice of a complicated mass of steel as the hero of his epic is almost a paradigm of Marx's discovery of social metaphors in material phenomena; but the comic deflation which rational human criteria would have brought to a Joycean treatment of the theme is foreign to Eisenstein's thoroughly technological sensibility.* The technically superb montages in

*Compare the awestruck account of the brain in terms of a super-telephone-exchange in any popular handbook of physiology, with the devastating non-sequiturs of Joyce's fusion of H. C. Earwicker's brain with a radio: " . . . their tolvtubular high fidelity daildialler, as modern as tomorrow afternoon and in appearance up to the minute, . . . with a vitaltone speaker, capable of capturing skybuddies, harbour craft emittences, key clickings, vaticum cleaners, due to woman formed mobile or man made static and bawling the whowle hamshack and wobble down in an eliminium sounds pound so as to serve him up a melegoturny marygoraumd, eclectrically filtered for allirish earths and ohmes." (FW-309)

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the final reel, which fuse hurrying crewmen with driving pistons and taut gunners with menacing guns, betray a fatally romantic exaltation of the merely sub-human: like Byron's identification of himself with a thunderstorm.

Now Joyce, like any twentieth-century artist, contemplates an exactly similar society; organized, like Eisenstein's battleship, at the material level of minimal intelligibility; complexly interlocking and elaborately meaningless, its human components reduced by a colossal program of assembly-line education and "vocational guidance" to the status of replaceable parts.

> The whirr of flapping leathern bands and hum of dynamos from the powerhouse urged Stephen to be on. Beingless beings. Stop! Throb always without you and the throb always within. Your heart you sing of. I between them. Where? Between two roaring worlds where they swirl, I. Shatter them, one and both. But stun myself too in the blow. (U-238.)

"Beingless beings"—phenomena without *Ens*—has become a ruling perception in twentieth-century sensibility at its upper levels of self-awareness. One may instance Picasso's marriages of collage and cubism, in which a human semblance—like the mind of Leopold Bloom—takes shape through a jumble of vases, guitars, newspaper clippings, and scraps of cloth; and Eliot's definitive formulation in *The Hollow Men*:

> *Shape without form, shade without colour,*
> *Paralysed force, gesture without motion.*

"Throb always without you and the throb always within" betrays Stephen's unwilling recognition that as a contemporary man he has the machine in his guts; hence, "Your heart you sing of," he muses in irony, half to himself and half to the dynamo, standing outside the throbbing heart of Dublin. The superiority of *Ulysses* to *Potemkin* consists essentially in the presence of these moral criteria (whose vehicle here is irony) along with the metaphorical perception. An important vehicle of these criteria elsewhere is the mediaeval metaphor of the Body Politic, hovering over *Ulysses* in every episode, Lungs in the newspaper office,

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Blood in the corpuscular citizens circulating the street, Stomach in the crowded eating-houses ("Pungent meat-juice, slop of greens. See the animals feed"); a mocking phantasm this, insanely mechanical at other levels than that of literary execution, of Marx's well-meaning quest of the Mystical Body. The Body that emerges from Joyce's epic is that of a gigantic robot; the intricate correspondences and theme-words have a more than accidental connection with a philosophy of making that glories in the assemblage of standardized parts, while the strains to which the language is subjected have, as the eminently technological eye of Moholy-Nagy did not fail to observe, a real affinity with the processes of welding, riveting, and casting.

Unlike the director of *Potemkin,* then, Joyce in discovering the dominant metaphors of his society raises them by the application of human criteria to human intelligibility. But it is no isolated Soviet freak that an Eisenstein could rally uncritical international fascination with so uninteresting a hero as an armoured cruiser. The Russian director, in a milieu that through the catalysing effect of revolution has accepted the universal premises more frankly than the rest of the world, has merely arrived more swiftly than his Western contemporaries at the goal to which all signs today are pointing. The ability of the American imagination to make a household pet of the B-29 is merely a less-focussed example of the same tendency. Before that came the Ford, the car with a personality. Before that came the widespread amateur interest in gadgets: every man his own inventor. Bloom in the cemetery in 1904 conceiving a superior coffin is dutifully obeying the precept to invent a better mousetrap. So things have gone. Through muddy cross-currents of conflicting standards, enmeshed by the tantalizing seaweed of a dozen ethical sirens, the self-dramatized image of twentieth-century man, the contemporary myth of the contemporary ego, has been sinking slowly more deeply into matter for at least a century and probably for three. *Potemkin* merely signals firm mud and a long night. The descent from daylight set in long before.

That is where Sherlock Holmes comes in. Sherlock Holmes

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and Dr. Watson epitomize the Split Man: spiritually and intellectually split. *Potemkin,* thirty years later, epitomizes the healing of the split by the crushing of the spiritual and the intellectual, like an amputee forgetting his disability under morphia. Human plights follow human appetites, and the appetite for technology is largely narcotic. Here the completeness of Joyce's synthesis becomes evident: the split, and the consequences of the split. Joyce's battleship is the organization of Dublin; his Holmes and Watson are Stephen and Bloom. Bloom is half of the split man; he is enabled to forget that he has lost his brain and soul by his endless ox-eyed contemplation of the Dublin kaleidoscope. That his interior monologue consists so largely of nouns, that Joyce was able to focus Bloom so clearly through a catalogue of urban miscellany, signalizes the complete, narcotic immersion of Bloom in his environment. The sea of matter surges round him like amniotic fluid, and in his last conscious moment he assumes the attitude of a foetus: "Reclined laterally, left, with right and left legs flexed, . . . the childman weary, the manchild in the womb." (U-722). That matter is narcotic for Bloom is the point of the Lotus-eaters episode, which merely inflects the familiar panorama with running metaphors from dreams and drugs. Opium is the religion of the people.

Stephen is the other half of the split man, in whom taste and intellect have brought about scorn of the civic and domestic virtues that persist, despite the want of suitable evoking objects, in Bloom's sensibility. For Stephen, Dublin is equally narcotic, since with his aesthete's eye he can scrutinize it endlessly for dilettantish epiphanies whose import reinforces his scorn. For Stephen the body is characteristically an impediment, as it was for Shelley; his weak eyes and aching teeth are a comic transliteration of "the shadow of our night" which he would "outsoar". That he descends into Mabbot Street in search of bodily pleasure represents a weakening of his precarious integrity, a rapprochement to the Bloomian premises, that prefigures their ultimate wordless union when Stephen has sunk to a drunken husk of matter on the littered street.

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The long painful scene at 7 Eccles Street after their homecoming exploits to the full through the caustic impartiality of its catechetical narration Bloom's mute affection for Stephen and Stephen's impatient, tolerant scorn of Bloom. That Stephen declines, at his host's suggestion, to wash his hands (U-657) is the only overt rebuff; but the ironic avoidance of direct discourse, and the abundance in the episode of Bloomian detail concerning the waterworks, the contents of the kitchen cupboard, and numerous scientific laws, which so little engage the concerns of Stephen that he is barely to be perceived hovering through their midst, like a grin without a cat, steep the tragic antipathy of the two men into the very texture of the episode. These masochistic abysses of the Bloom-Watson sensibility are present in Doyle's naive crisis in *The Three Garridebs*, when Holmes, alarmed at Watson's narrow escape from death by gunfire, flings wiry arms of compassion around him:

> It was worth a wound—it was worth many wounds—to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. . . . All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation.

The suffering Watson in Holmes' masculine embrace will recall to readers of *Ulysses* Bloom's hallucinated self-image as a petticoated emptier of brothel chamberpots. (U-519 ff.)

Bloom is "society", at the level of hurrying, interlocking, kaleidoscopic Dublin. Stephen is the outlaw, accumulating dangerously undischarged potential, a sour and scornful thundercloud, brooding above Dublin in conscious superiority ("Shatter them, one and both. But stun myself too in the blow"). The Enemy of the People. The Savage Noble.

Bloom is muzzy respectability: Dr. Watson.

Stephen is the anarchic aesthete: Sherlock Holmes.

To document the latter connection is to highlight a number of Joyce's most cogent political perceptions; he offers in the Bloom-Stephen relationship a large-scale diagnosis of a society masochis-

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tically engaged in the abject worship of anarchic pride. A corresponding diagnosis of Holmes may serve to emphasize these dynamic verdicts in *Ulysses*, so thoroughly does Holmes and the generic sleuth approximate a contemporary ideal. Al Capp, of course, has made much the same point, less savagely and with less documentation. L'il Abner's prayerful "Feerless Fosdick is mah ideel!" differs from Watson's regard for Holmes only in contemporaneity, and from Bloom's awe of Stephen only in inferior intensity.

The most cogent available character sketch of Holmes is Huxley's celebrated definition of the Educated Man:

> . . . so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will, and does with ease and pleasure all that, as a mechanism, it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine, with all its parts of equal strength, and in smooth working order; ready, like a steam engine, to be turned to any kind of work . . . ; whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the great and fundamental truths of Nature and of the laws of her operation; one who, no stunted ascetic, is full of life and fire, but whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience; one who has learned to love all beauty, whether of Nature or of art, to hate all vileness, and to respect others as himself.

Set beside this some worshipful phrases from Doyle; first as to the thinking-machine:

> All emotions, and (love) particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine the world has ever seen. . . . Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, would not be more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature such as his.

As for "the great and fundamental truths of Nature," Holmes is well-stocked with the current Darwinian lore that Huxley had in mind; for example, he subscribes to a moral determinism based on Darwin's metaphor of "climbing up the family tree:"

> I have a theory that the individual represents in his development the whole procession of his ancestors, and that such a sudden turn to good

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> or evil stands for some strong influence which came into the line of his pedigree. . . .
>
> This child's disposition is abnormally cruel, merely for cruelty's sake, and . . . he derives this from his smiling father. . . .
>
> The man had hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind. A criminal strain ran in his blood, which, instead of being modified, was increased and rendered infinitely more dangerous by his extraordinary mental powers.

(This crude biological determinism represents an evolving sense of the presence of the past that reaches its most civilized expression in Eliot's *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, in the monologues of Stephen Dedalus on the nightmare of history

> Dead breaths I living breathe, tread dead dust, devour a urinous offal from all dead (U-51),

and in the intricate analogical simultaneities of *Finnegans Wake*.)

As for the "lover of beauty, whether of Nature or Art," we have Holmes' response to the gathering dawn

> How sweet the morning air is! See how that one little cloud floats like a pink feather from some gigantic flamingo,

the violin playing, the monograph upon the Polyphonic Motets of Lassus "printed for private circulation and said by experts to be the last word upon the subject." The connections with Stephen Dedalus scarcely need to be indicated.

It is clear that Holmes' immediate parents were the male and female halves of Conan Doyle's perplexed nineteenth century brain. On the one hand, his medical training and brisk hapless up-to-dateness aligned him with the professional scientists of whom Huxley was spokesman, and saddled him with their materialism, their cult of infallibility, their aesthete-like detachment from human concerns, and their desperate anxiety to enchain in suitable dogmas a settled order that seemed on the point of falling apart. On the other hand, he retained, Bloom-like, some shreds of middle-class sentimentality, respectability, and delight in the more complacent forms of emotional self-indulgence. Racked by this split, roughly between the head and the heart, that was proving

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equally perplexing to minds at the level of Matthew Arnold's (compare Arnold's incisive prose and his wistful melancholy verse), Doyle simply achieved a personal catharsis by projecting the antagonists as the incisive, inhuman Holmes and the amiable, fuddled Watson. That he should have chosen a sleuth for his major hero was inevitable. Holmes is simply the Victorian geologist harnessed to social concerns. He reads the record of the cigar-ash and the footprint with the confident efficiency of his prototype reading the record of the rocks. (The obvious connection with Joyce's epiphanies will be discussed later). His habit of adducing analogous crimes ("The cases of Dolsky in Odessa and of Leturier in Montpellier will occur at once to any toxicologist") follows the modes of the biologist's eye for skeletal resemblances between apparently diverse species; and his pursuit of the barely-focussed arch-criminal Moriarty has distinct overtones of the war of the scientist with the Church, so much so that it is difficult not to draw an analogy between Holmes' feat in hurling the arch-fiend over the Reichenbach precipice, and (for example) Huxley's resounding snub to Bishop Wilberforce.

Bloom's constant scientific preoccupation with principles he can never quite remember and inventions he never manages to perfect simply represents a rapprochement towards his Holmes-Huxley-Dedalus ideal: like Watson's fumbling efforts at deduction; indeed towards the end of *Ulysses* we find Bloom, anxious for Stephen's approval, "Sherlockholmesing" the sailor in the cabman's shelter. The political application of the myth becomes explicit when one realizes that Joyce's main models for the Utopian reveries of Bloom (U-697 ff.) were the prophecies of H. G. Wells. The progression of Bloom's projects from an improved line of kindergarten equipment (U-667) to immense hydroelectric, tramline, and milk delivery schemes (U-703) within a few pages is typically Wellsian.

That the nineteenth-century scientist vaunted himself on a detachment that was formerly the prerogative of the artist gives us a link of capital importance reaching to Stephen Dedalus. Holmes is nothing if not an aesthete. His grandmother was the

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sister of the French artist Vernet, on which he remarked, apropos of his profession, "Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms." It is recorded of him that he

> . . . had the impersonal joy of the true artist in his better work, even as he mourned darkly when it fell below the high level to which he aspired.

Offered a place on the next honours list, he smiles a Paterian smile and protests that he plays "the game for the game's own sake." In every way he approximates the popular image of the Bohemian aesthete. "His cigars in the coal-scuttle, his tobacco in the toe-end of a Persian slipper, and his unanswered correspondence transfixed by a jack-knife into the very centre of his wooden mantlepiece" are orthodox Bohemian props. So is the habit of spending several days in bed from time to time, and the alternation "between cocaine and ambition." Stephen's frequentation of the bordellos of Paris and Dublin is analogous to Holmes' cocaine, a cynical defiance of a pleasureless world. There is a revealing account in the *Portrait* (260) of Stephen in bed shrinking from "common noises, hoarse voices, sleepy prayers" and turning his face toward "the great overblown scarlet flowers of the tattered wallpaper." The symbolism is analogous: the flowers are overblown whores, the voices the "commonplaces of existence" that drove Holmes to desperation and drugs.

With Stephen's counterfeit humility compare Holmes' attitude to his life and work in the following dialogue:

> "You reasoned it out so beautifully," I exclaimed in unfeigned admiration. "It is so long a chain, and yet every link rings true."
>
> "It saved me from ennui," he answered, yawning. "Alas, I already feel it closing in upon me! My life is spent in one long effort to escape from the commonplaces of existence. These little problems help me to do so."
>
> "And you are a benefactor of the race," said I.
>
> He shrugged his shoulders. "Well, perhaps, after all, it is of some little use," he remarked. "'*L'homme c'est rien—l'oeuvre c'est tout*,' as Gustave Flaubert wrote to George Sand."

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Holmes' bric-a-brac of erudition has a patent connection with Stephen's dialectical virtuosity in the Library scene. Stephen, it will be remembered, achieved an intricate fusion between his own dilemma, Hamlet's, Shakespeare's, and the heresies of the early Church, propped with analogies from Milton, Swinburne, Socrates, Drummond of Hawthornden, Bruno Latini, St. Thomas Aquinas, and others. In a single novel, *The Sign of Four*, Holmes recommends Winwood Reade's *The Martyrdom of Man*, quotes Goethe twice, cites Richter and alludes to his connection with Carlyle, and talks in a single brilliant session of miracle plays, mediaeval pottery, Stradivarius violins, the Buddhism of Ceylon, and the warship of the future, "handling each as though he had made a special study of it." That Doyle sought by these devices to impress his public with Holmes' vast learning shows simply that Doyle was a Bloom writing for Blooms. Joyce's advantage arises from his knowledge that the encyclopaedism of the sleuth may be traced through his pedigree to the Renaissance virtuoso, who in a similar way had sought to dominate the material world by swallowing its data whole. In Joyce this moral judgment is dramatically implied. He does not merely invite the reader to gape. Stephen's virtuosity, like the multilingual erudition of *The Waste Land* ("I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter"), is the calculated image of an over-ripe culture in despair, constantly examining its mind as represented by its literary monuments: the political analogue of morbid introspection and self-absorption:

> And you who wrest old images from the burial earth! The brainsick words of sophists: Antisthenes. A lore of drugs. (U-238.)

These fragments, it is true, Stephen has shored against his ruins. As Bloom's mind is a compost of objects, so is Stephen's a fabric of quotations. For the aesthete whose contacts with life border on the precious, literature represents a dictionary of sensibility, analogous to the dictionaries of words that Stephen studied in lieu of living language. The Conan Doyle who created Holmes shared with Stephen this frantic appetite for mastery of the past (hence

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his historical novels). Unable and unwilling, unlike James Joyce, to get up his texts and make a thorough-going presentation of the type; incapable, in fact, by reason of his Bloom-like blindness, of judging the type and perceiving that it was worth the labour of lifting it to an intelligibility that should expose it, he gratified his admiration for the encyclopaedic virtuoso by simply proclaiming Holmes a universal authority.

Something of the Bloom in Doyle contributed to his tacit judgment, at odds with his admiration for the sleuth, that Holmes was morally merely a specialized criminal. "Burglary," remarks Sherlock, "has always been an alternative profession, had I cared to adopt it, and I have little doubt that I should have come to the front." It is significant that whenever illegal methods of finishing off a case present themselves, Watson has qualms, just as Bloom feels ill at ease in the brothel that Dedalus inhabits with easy assurance. For Holmes, however, detection is as a-moral as geometry (it is significant how frequently he refers to a case as "a pretty little demonstration."). His criteria are entirely aesthetic; and no antithesis between art and prudence ever enters his head, any more than it enters the heads of those who advocate birth-control for Europe as a means of reducing the strain on American aid, or than it entered the head of Stephen Dedalus when he flung himself into the arms of a prostitute in quest of experience useful to the artist. (An analogous case is Holmes' quasi-seduction of a housemaid with information to give; to Watson's horrified protest he replies, "You must play your cards as best you can.")

Aesthetic criteria for moral problems are involved with Holmes' and Stephen's overweening pride. The sleuth, like the aesthete, can be traced on this side of his nature through the Byronic postures to the inverted morality unleashed by Rousseau. The premise of each is that he stands apart from society and interferes where he sees fit. In about half his cases, Holmes as judge supplements the work of Holmes as sleuth by permitting the criminal to escape; which follows from the way his interest in his work is focussed not on justice but on the aesthetic neatness

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of the "demonstration." On at least one occasion he snubbed a King, as Stephen in the Circe hallucinations snubbed Edward VII (U-575). He damns "the public, the great unobservant public, who could hardly tell a weaver by his tooth or a compositor by his left thumb;" (Cf. Stephen about to pay Bella Cohen: "This silken purse I made out of the sow's ear of the public." (U-542)) and draws an analogy with his career in retirement as a bee-fancier "when I watched the little working gangs as once I watched the criminal world of London." Nor are his judgments reserved for others. He "cannot agree with those who rank modesty among the virtues," and in the face of death at the hands of Moriarty abrogates to himself the highest Judgment Seat: "If my record were closed tonight I could still survey it with absolute equanimity. The air of London is the sweeter for my presence. In over a thousand cases I am not aware that I have ever used my powers on the wrong side. Of late I have been tempted to look into the problems furnished by nature, rather than those more superficial ones for which our artificial state of society is responsible." The last sentence enforces his dual pedigree: by Huxley, out of Rousseau.

Stephen with his "Signatures of all things I am here to read" betrays the same eccentric ancestry. The epiphany, as understood by Joyce, represents the elevation of matter to the intelligibility proper to the Being of which it partakes. Stephen, however, as he is presented in the *Portrait* and in *Ulysses*, is much less interested in the intelligibility of *Ens* than in his own status as "Priest of the Eternal Imagination":

> Wombed in sin darkness I was too, made not begotten. By them, the man with my voice and my eyes and a ghostwoman with ashes on her breath. They clasped and sundered, did the coupler's will. From before the ages He willed me and now may not will me away or ever. (U-39.)

The Art of Gesture which he discusses with Lynch en route to the brothel is a picaresque manifestation of the epiphany:

> So that gesture, not music, not odours, would be a universal

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> language, the gift of tongues rendering visible not the lay sense but the first entelechy, the structural rhythm. (U-425.)

These material gestures of eternal intangibles, Augustine's *Vestigia Dei,* the quest and scrutiny of which formed so large a part of Joyce's activity, offer metaphysical insights corresponding to the clarification introduced into a Holmes case by a "clue." ("It has long been an axiom of mine," pontificates Sherlock, "that the little things are infinitely the most important.") And one of his impatient rebukes to Watson might be an explicit vulgarization of the aesthetic credo of Joyce or Flaubert:

> I can never bring you to realize the importance of sleeves, the suggestiveness of thumbnails, or the great issues that can hang on a bootlace.
>
> As Cuvier (he goes on in another place) could correctly describe a whole animal by the contemplation of a single bone, so the observer who has thoroughly understood one link in a series of incidents should be able to state all the other ones, both before and after.

But for full results the isolated epiphany should be seen in a context of omniscience:

> It is necessary that the reasoner should be able to utilize all the facts which have come to his knowledge, and this in itself implies . . . a possession of all knowledge.

Holmes makes for himself the more modest claim of omniscience within his own field, in terms which in no way abrogate his explicit competition with the All-Knowing. Like Joyce with his famous trunk-fulls of brown paper envelopes, Holmes trusts to a filing system to make up for a lack of innate omniscience:

> For many years he had adopted the system of docketing all paragraphs concerning men and things, so that it was difficult to name a subject or a person on which he could not at once furnish information. In this case, I found her biography sandwiched between that of a Hebrew Rabbi and that of a staff-commander who had written a monograph upon the deep-sea fishes.

Since the overflowing morgues of *Time* and *Life* became the Pierian spring of American knowledge, Holmes' indexes have be-

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come less comic than menacing. And, as can be shown from the shrilly gesticulating rhythms of *Time* prose alone, the communal megalomania exploited by Mr. Luce owes much of its definitive formulation to the monologues of Stephen Dedalus. America's "strandentwining cables of all flesh" (U-39) are the teletype wires across which from the Manhattan navel flow weekly pulsating gestures of contempt for Hebrew Rabbis, staff commanders, poets, ingenues, and champion milkers of cows. "Will you be as gods?" mused Stephen. "Gaze in your omphalos." The god-hungry Bloom's eyes of the *Time* subscriber gaze with Watsonian reverence towards the fact-crammed morgue in Rockefeller Centre, where a super-Holmes probes into every backyard secret and parcels epiphanies into contemptuous packages with a truly Holmesian estimate of his worshipper's intelligence.

The Luce publications are instanced here because they reveal the Holmes-Dedalus nexus in an unexpectedly pertinent way. In this single massive contemporary phenomenon the reader can see confirmed Joyce's diagnosis of the monstrous pride inherent in the aesthete's *weltanschauung*. And it is the reiterated lesson of any study of Joyce that the genuine artist fuses moral judgments with metaphorical and symbolic perceptions; whereas the low-grade artist will invariably turn up with the metaphorical perceptions alone, in a relaxed, unconscious, and uninspected form. It was because of their infallible documentation of the ambient sensibility of the time that Joyce spent so much energy pondering advertisements, newspapers, sidewalk slang, and popular fiction and virtually compiled his major works by pasting phrases so gleaned together.

The reason for the symbolic validity of low-grade art is obvious. The symbol infallibly projects a psychological state. It does this automatically and sub-rationally, as Vico perceived in investigating ancient myths as clues to the collective attitudes of primitive peoples. And the symbol is the product either of the collective consciousness which insofar as it is collective is sub-rational; or **of** some individual mind totally and irretrievably immersed in the

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collective welter. Hence the Kilroy-Was-Here myth on the one hand, and the Sherlock Holmes stories on the other.

Art of less than maximum intensity will not survive, art of maximum intensity will not be achieved, unless it be deeply rooted in the contemporary psychological nodes and tensions. The Romantic landscape tradition, which set in with Pope's *Windsor Forest* as a mild pastoral, and continued through Cowper and others who described scenery apparently simply because they enjoyed looking at it, only became deeply entrenched with the discovery, exploited with increasing vehemence by the major generations of romanticists, that accounts of rocks and sunbursts, countryside and storm, formed an ideal symbolic disguise for the tides of passion a new commercial ethos had unleashed. The continuing popularity of detective fiction may be accounted for in a similar way. And the similarity between the central situation of Joyce's epic and the Holmes-Watson archetype of the ubiquitous whodunit is powerful evidence for the way Joyce's work meshes with the most urgent contemporary psychological prepossessions and their political expressions. So much indeed has Joyce succeeded in this repect, that he has woefully confounded the most impressively-sponsored of his expounders, who are not prevented by all the weight of his irony from seeing Stephen Dedalus as an unhappy but potentially benign intellectual who only requires housebreaking by some sensible patron, and Bloom as a highly intelligent because a highly curious hero. That is to say, so comprehensive is the contemporary image offered by *Ulysses*, that the Blooms and Dedaluses of the literary world cannot disentangle its figures from their own self-respect.

That is why there has been, after twenty-five years, no useful critique of *Ulysses*. That Bloom's goodness is potential only, and is frustrated by his material context, and that Stephen's incisiveness is little more than a striking talent for objectifying his own confusions, are elementary moral perceptions too subtle for audiences that can rejoice in the essential sanity of Watson and the essential divinity of Holmes. *Ulysses* is still too up-to-date to be understood. That *Ulysses* is an Inferno and not a naturalistic

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novel, that it contains not a mystical doctrine but an infinite number of devastating perceptions ordered towards maximal intelligibility in terms of the analogy of Being, that it contains not one word of superfluous documentation, nor a single phrase that has not intense relevance to the working-out of the most complex set of running metaphors in the entire Shakespearean tradition of English poetry, are facts to which it may be well for the present-day critic to bear witness; since only a few more years of our present decline into a civilization of appetites and reflexes may place the mighty synthesis which Joyce achieved beyond understanding altogether.

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Four Poems

WILLIAM MEREDITH

TREES IN A GROVE

Of five things put in mind by Sycamores,
I think first of the sad baldheaded man
In a pepper-and-salt tweed suit who knew the trees
And calling them out on tree-walks in our suburb
Discovered their myths and virtues with their names,
The sovereign words by which a child takes hold.

I was six the summer that I first got hold
Of the white pied spicy word of Sycamore,
The age when children will incant new names.
That night I dreamt I was a flying man
And could escape the backyards of our suburb
By saying Sycamore, rise through the trees.

Abroad and serious I found a clump of trees
That over Hopkins' towery city hold
A hill unspoiled with a view of its brick suburbs.
Jump at the crown a transposed Sycamore
Did what a simple thing will, made men
For me of Hopkins, Arnold, Glanvil, once just names.

Fourth I am summoned at the white trees' name
To where I lay kissed at the base of forest trees
Wondering what on earth could happen to a man
Once he has had such a precious thing to hold.
We made all kinds of love under a Sycamore
Huge and tameless as if there were no suburbs.

As old houses stand exemplary in suburbs
With only a little ground, but give proud names
To rows of tenements, so two Sycamores

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King and queen it in my mind's trees:
They are lean candelabra and now they hold
Ice high before a soft willow-thinking man;

And now they are sea-images to a dry landsman
Who would not willingly quit his sitfast suburb
But, seeing the watery pearl fingers hold
To the winter cloud like drogues, he calls their names,
Is changed to a seaman naming coral trees
Where they fret exotic seas like Sycamores.

It is mere wisdom Sycamores should hold
My thoughts: suburbs eat away the trees,
Age, the tissues of a man and at last his names.

RUS IN URBE

In a city garden an espaliered tree
Like Shiva, handling the brick south wall,
Or better like a Jesse tree, holds big
Real pears on each contrived square bough.
And in a tub a yew turned like a top,
That could as easily have been a peacock
Or half of a deer, in the unnatural kingdom
Of topiary, where the will is done,
Is lovely to the point nobody asks:
What would have been its genius, uncut?
Any more than: what did the rock look like
Before Praxiteles cut it away?
Then this whole garden four flights towards the sun
Raised by no tropism, but its uselessness
In a strict space; the humus carried there
In wooden trays. And maybe one rich woman
Saved somehow in the evening by its green.
Thus have I seen unnaturally to love
But without harm, your beautiful remove.

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EPITAPH FOR A LATIN POET

By a high and clear rill
  On a round mountain
Years from now deer will
  Nuzzle out this fountain

Of your strict plain song
  That we put below ground,
Soft ears hear again song.
  But now there is no sound.

THE POLL

The concept they could never take was size.
In mildest latitudes they put up domes
And set out wine-glass elms against the sky
Which, open, would provoke pogroms and war.
They bred down dogs and lovers to a toy class
More out of fear of monsters than for looks.
A giant mushroom smelled up all their dreams,
And look what they always did to outsize men.

The cliff of self was the worst place to stand:
Looming as big and lumpy as the sea,
A laziness that Gallup couldn't count
Stretched beyond where questionnaires could snoop;
And all behind them blinked the last resort
Without police or precincts for the winter,
Taken by squatters with enormous families
And no maids, innumerable as spores.

So when they met they used to ask each other:
Where is the metric system that will answer?

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*The Tooth**

SHIRLEY JACKSON

THE BUS WAS WAITING, panting heavily at the curb in front of the small bus station, its great blue and silver bulk glittering in the moonlight. There were only a few people interested in the bus, and at that time of night no one passing on the sidewalk: the one movie theatre in town had finished its show and closed its doors an hour before, and all the movie patrons had been to the drug store for ice cream and gone on home; now the drug store was closed and dark, another silent doorway in the long midnight street. The only town lights were the street lights, the lights in the all-night lunch stand across the street, and the one remaining counter lamp in the bus station where the girl sat in the ticket office with her hat and coat on, only waiting for the New York bus to leave before she went home to bed.

Standing on the sidewalk next to the open door of the bus Clara Spencer held her husband's arm nervously. "I feel so funny," she said.

"Are you all right?" he asked. "Do you think I ought to go with you?"

"No, of course not," she said. "I'll be all right." It was hard for her to talk because of her swollen jaw; she kept a handkerchief pressed to her face and held hard to her husband. "Are you sure *you'll* be all right?" she asked. "I'll be back tomorrow night at the latest. Or else I'll call."

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"Everything will be fine," he said heartily. "By tomorrow noon it'll all be gone. Tell the dentist if there's anything wrong I can come right down."

"I feel so funny," she said. "Light-headed, and sort of dizzy."

"That's because of the dope," he said. "All that codein, and the whisky, and nothing to eat all day."

She giggled nervously. "I couldn't comb my hair, my hand shook so. I'm glad it's dark."

"Try to sleep in the bus," he said. "Did you take a sleeping pill?"

"Yes," she said. They were waiting for the bus driver to finish his cup of coffee in the lunch stand; they could see him through the glass window, sitting at the counter, taking his time. "I feel so *funny*," she said.

"You know, Clara," he made his voice very weighty, as though if he spoke more seriously his words would carry more conviction and be therefore more comforting, "you know, I'm glad you're going down to New York to have Zimmerman take care of this. I'd never forgive myself if it turned out to be something serious and I let you go to this butcher up here."

"It's just a *tooth*ache," Clara said uneasily, "nothing very serious about a *toothache*."

"You can't tell," he said. "It might be abscessed or something; I'm sure he'll have to pull it."

"Don't even talk like that," she said, and shivered.

"Well, it looks pretty bad," he said soberly, as before. "Your face so swollen, and all. Don't you worry."

"I'm not worrying," she said. "I just feel as if I were all tooth. Nothing else."

The bus driver got up from the stool and walked over to pay his check. Clara moved toward the bus, and her husband said. "Take your time, you've got plenty of time."

"I just feel funny," Clara said.

"Listen," her husband said, "that tooth's been bothering you off and on for years; at least six or seven times since I've known you you've had trouble with that tooth. It's about time something

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was done. You had a toothache on our honeymoon," he finished accusingly.

"Did I?" Clara said. "You know," she went on, and laughed, "I was in such a hurry I didn't dress properly. I have on old stockings and I just dumped everything into my good pocketbook."

"Are you sure you have enough money?" he said.

"Almost twenty-five dollars," Clara said. "I'll be home tomorrow."

"Wire if you need more," he said. The bus driver appeared in the doorway of the lunch room. "Don't worry," he said.

"Listen," Clara said suddenly, "are you *sure* you'll be all right? Mrs. Lang will be over in the morning in time to make breakfast, and Johnny doesn't need to go to school if things are too mixed up."

"I know," he said.

"Mrs. Lang," she said, checking on her fingers. "I called Mrs. Lang, I left the grocery order on the kitchen table, you can have the cold tongue for lunch and in case I don't get back Mrs. Lang will give you dinner. The cleaner ought to come about four o'clock, I won't be back so give him your brown suit and it doesn't matter if you forget but be sure to empty the pockets."

"Wire if you need more money," he said. "Or call. I'll stay home tomorrow so you can call at home."

"Mrs. Lang will take care of the baby," she said.

"Or you can wire," he said.

The bus driver came across the street and stood by the entrance to the bus.

"Okay?" the bus driver said.

"Goodbye," Clara said to her husband.

"You'll feel all right tomorrow," her husband said. "It's only a toothache."

"I'm fine," Clara said. "Don't you worry." She got onto the bus and then stopped, with the bus driver waiting behind her. "Milkman," she said to her husband. "Leave a note telling him we want eggs."

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"I will," her husband said. "Goodbye."

"Goodbye," Clara said. She moved on into the bus and behind her the driver swung into his seat. The bus was nearly empty and she went far back and sat down at the window outside which her husband waited. "Goodbye," she said to him through the glass, "take care of yourself."

The bus stirred, groaned, and pulled itself forward. Clara turned her head to wave goodbye once more and then lay back against the heavy soft seat. Good Lord, she thought, what a thing to do; outside, the familiar street slipped past, strange and dark and seen, unexpectedly, from the unique station of a person leaving town, going away on a bus; it isn't as though it's the first time I've ever been to New York, Clara thought indignantly, it's the whisky and the codein and the sleeping pill and the toothache. She checked hastily to see if her codein tablets were in her pocketbook; they had been standing, along with the aspirin and a glass of water, on the dining room sideboard, but somewhere in the lunatic flight from her home she must have picked them up, because they were in her pocketbook now, along with the twenty-odd dollars and her compact and comb and lipstick. She could tell from the feel of the lipstick that she had brought the old, nearly finished one, not the new one that was a darker shade and had cost two-fifty. There was a run in her stocking and a hole in the toe that she never noticed at home wearing her old comfortable shoes, but which was now suddenly and disagreeably apparent inside her best narrow-toed shoes. Well, she thought, I can buy new stockings in New York tomorrow, after the tooth is fixed, after everything's all right. She put her tongue cautiously on the tooth and was rewarded with a split-second crash of pain.

The bus stopped at a red light and the driver got out of his seat and came back toward her. "Forgot to get your ticket before," he said.

"I guess I was a little rushed at the last minute," she said. She found the ticket in her coat pocket and gave it to him. "When do we get to New York?" she asked.

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"Five-fifteen," he said. "Plenty of time for breakfast. One-way ticket?"

"I'm coming back by train," she said, without seeing why she had to tell him, except that it was late at night and people isolated together in some strange prison like a bus had to be more friendly and communicative than at other times.

"Me, I'm coming back by bus," he said, and they both laughed, she painfully because of her swollen face. When he went back to his seat far away at the front of the bus she lay back peacefully against the seat. She could feel the sleeping pill pulling at her; the throb of the toothache was distant now, and mingled with the movement of the bus, a steady beat like her heartbeat which she could hear louder and louder, going on through the night. She put her head back and her feet up, discreetly covered with her skirt, and fell asleep without saying goodbye to the town.

She opened her eyes once and they were moving almost silently through the darkness. Her tooth was pulsing steadily and she turned her cheek against the cool back of the seat in weary resignation. There was a thin line of lights along the ceiling of the bus and no other light. Far ahead of her in the bus she could see the other people sitting; the driver, so far away as to be only a tiny figure at the end of a telescope, was straight at the wheel, seemingly awake. She fell back into her fantastic sleep.

She woke up later because the bus had stopped, the end of that silent motion through the darkness so positive a shock that it woke her stunned, and it was a minute before the ache began again. People were moving along the aisle of the bus and the driver, turning around, said, "Fifteen minutes." She got up and followed everyone else out, all but her eyes still asleep, her feet moving without awareness. They were stopped beside an all-night restaurant, lonely and lighted on the vacant road. Inside, it was warm and busy and full of people. She saw a seat at the end of the counter and sat down, not aware that she had fallen asleep again when someone sat down next to her and touched her arm. When she looked around foggily he said "Travelling far?"

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"Yes," she said.

He was wearing a blue suit and he looked tall; she could not focus her eyes to see any more.

"You want coffee?" he asked.

She nodded and he pointed to the counter in front of her where a cup of coffee sat steaming.

"Drink it quickly," he said.

She sipped at it delicately; she may have put her face down and tasted it without lifting the cup. The strange man was talking.

"Even farther than Samarkand," he was saying, "and the waves ringing on the shore like bells."

"Okay, folks," the bus driver said, and she gulped quickly at the coffee, drank enough to get her back into the bus.

When she sat down in her seat again the strange man sat down beside her. It was so dark in the bus that the lights from the restaurant were unbearably glaring and she closed her eyes. When her eyes were shut, before she fell asleep, she was closed in alone with the toothache.

"The flutes play all night," the strange man said, "and the stars are as big as the moon and the moon is as big as a lake."

As the bus started up again they slipped back into the darkness and only the thin thread of lights along the ceiling of the bus held them together, brought the back of the bus where she sat along with the front of the bus where the driver sat and the people sitting there so far away from her. The lights tied them together and the strange man next to her was saying "Nothing to do all day but lie under the trees."

Inside the bus, travelling on, she was nothing; she was passing the trees and the occasional sleeping houses, and she was in the bus but she was between here and there, joined tenuously to the bus driver by a thread of lights, being carried along without effort of her own.

"My name is Ray," the strange man said.

She was so deeply asleep that she stirred uneasily without knowl-

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edge, her forehead against the window, the darkness moving along beside her.

Then again that numbing shock, and, driven awake, she said, frightened, "What's happened?"

"It's all right," the strange man — Ray — said immediately. "Come along."

She followed him out of the bus, into the same restaurant, seemingly, but when she started to sit down at the same seat at the end of the counter he took her hand and led her to a table. "Go and wash your face," he said. "Come back here afterward."

She went into the ladies' room and there was a girl standing there powdering her nose. Without turning around the girl said, "Costs a nickel. Leave the door fixed so's the next one won't have to pay."

The door was wedged so it would not close, with half a match folder in the lock. She left it the same way and went back to the table where Ray was sitting.

"What do you want?" she said and he pointed to another cup of coffee and a sandwich. "Go ahead," he said.

While she was eating her sandwich she heard his voice, musical and soft, "And while we were sailing past the island we heard a voice calling us. . . ."

Back in the bus Ray said "Put your head on my shoulder now, and go to sleep."

"I'm all right," she said.

"No," Ray said. "Before, your head was rattling against the window."

Once more she slept, and once more the bus stopped and she woke frightened, and Ray brought her again to a restaurant and more coffee. Her tooth came alive then, and with one hand pressing her cheek she searched through the pockets of her coat and then through her pocketbook until she found the little bottle of codein pills and she took two while Ray watched her.

She was finishing her coffee when she heard the sound of the bus motor and she started up suddenly, hurrying, and with Ray holding her arm she fled back into the dark shelter of her seat.

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The bus was moving forward when she realized that she had left her bottle of codein pills sitting on the table in the restaurant and now she was at the mercy of her tooth. For a minute she stared back at the lights of the restaurant through the bus window and then she put her head on Ray's shoulder and he was saying as she fell asleep, "The sand is so white it looks like snow, but it's not, even at night it's hot under your feet."

Then they stopped for the last time, and Ray brought her out of the bus and they stood for a minute in New York together. A woman passing them in the station said to the man following her with suitcases, "We're just on time, it's five-fifteen."

"I'm going to the dentist," she said to Ray.

"I know," he said. "I'll watch out for you."

He went away, although she did not see him go. She thought to watch for his blue suit going through the door, but there was nothing.

I ought to have thanked him, she thought stupidly, and went slowly into the station restaurant, where she ordered coffee again. The counter man looked at her with the worn sympathy of one who has spent a long night watching people get off and on busses. "Sleepy?" he asked.

"Yes," she said.

She discovered after a while that the bus station joined Pennsylvania Terminal and she was able to get into the main waiting room and find a seat on one of the benches by the time she fell asleep again.

Then someone shook her rudely by the shoulder and said "What train you taking, lady, it's nearly seven." She sat up and saw her pocketbook on her lap, her feet neatly crossed, a clock glaring into her face. She said "Thank you," and got up and walked blindly past the benches and got onto the escalator. Someone got on immediately behind her and touched her arm; she turned and it was Ray. "The grass is so green and so soft," he said, smiling, "and the water of the river is so cool."

She stared at him tiredly. When the escalator reached the top she stepped off and started to walk to the street she saw ahead.

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Ray came along beside her and his voice went on, "The sky is bluer than anything you've ever seen, and the songs. . . ."

She stepped quickly away from him and thought that people were looking at her as they passed. She stood on the corner waiting for the light to change and Ray came swiftly up to her and then away. "Look," he said as he passed, and he held out a handful of pearls.

* * *

Across the street there was a restaurant, just opening. She went in and sat down at a table, and a waitress was standing beside her frowning. "You was asleep," the waitress said accusingly.

"I'm very sorry," she said. It was morning. "Poached eggs and coffee, please."

It was a quarter to eight when she left the restaurant, and she thought, if I take a bus, go straight downtown now, I can sit in the drugstore across the street from the dentist's office and have more coffee until about eight-thirty and then go into the dentist's when it opens and he can take me first.

The busses were beginning to fill up; she got into the first bus that came along and could not find a seat. She wanted to go to twenty-third street, and got a seat just as they were passing twenty-sixth street; when she woke up she was so far downtown that it took her nearly half an hour to find a bus and get back to twenty-third.

At the corner of twenty-third street, while she was waiting for the light to change, she was caught up in a crowd of people and when they crossed the street and separated to go different directions someone fell into step beside her. For a minute she walked on without looking up, staring resentfully at the sidewalk, her tooth burning her, and then she looked up, but there was no blue suit among the people pressing by on either side.

When she turned into the office building where her dentist was, it was still very early morning. The doorman in the office building was freshly shaven and his hair was combed; he held the door open briskly, as at five o'clock he would be sluggish, his hair faintly out of place. She went in through the door with a feeling of achieve-

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ment; she had come successfully from one place to another, and this was the end of her journey and her objective.

The clean white nurse sat at the desk in the office; her eyes took in the swollen cheek, the tired shoulders, and she said, "You poor thing, you look worn out."

"I have a toothache." The nurse half-smiled, as though she were still waiting for the day when someone came in and said "My feet hurt." She stood up into the professional sunlight. "Come right in," she said. "We won't make you wait."

There was sunlight on the headrest of the dentist's chair, on the round white table, on the drill bending its smooth chromium head. The dentist smiled with the same tolerance as the nurse; perhaps all human ailments were contained in the teeth, and he could fix them if people would only come to him in time. The nurse said smoothly, "I'll get her file, doctor. We thought we'd better bring her right in."

She felt, while they were taking an X-ray, that there was nothing in her head to stop the malicious eye of the camera, as though the camera would look through her and photograph the nails in the wall next to her, or the dentist's cuff buttons, or the small thin bones of the dentist's instruments; the dentist said "Extraction" regretfully to the nurse, and the nurse said "Yes, doctor, I'll call them right away."

Her tooth, which had brought her here unerringly, seemed now the only part of her to have any identity. It seemed to have had its picture taken without her; it was the important creature which must be recorded and examined and gratified; she was only its unwilling vehicle, and only as such was she of interest to the dentist and the nurse, only as the bearer of her tooth was she worth their immediate and practiced attention. The dentist handed her a slip of paper with the picture of a full set of teeth drawn on it; her living tooth was checked with a black mark, and across the top of the paper was written "Lower molar; extraction."

"Take this slip," the dentist said, "and go right up to the address on this card; it's a surgeon dentist. They'll take care of you there."

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"What will they do?" she said. Not the question she wanted to ask, not: What about me? or How far down do the roots go?

"They'll take that tooth out," the dentist said testily, turning away. "Should have been done years ago."

I've stayed too long, she thought, he's tired of my tooth. She got up out of the dentist chair and said "Thank you. Goodbye."

"Goodbye," the dentist said. At the last minute he smiled at her, showing her his full white teeth, all in perfect control.

"Are you all right? Does it bother you too much?" the nurse asked.

"I'm all right."

"I can give you some codein tablets," the nurse said. "We'd rather you didn't take anything right now, of course, but I think I could let you have them if the tooth is really bad."

"No," she said, remembering her little bottle of codein pills on the table of a restaurant between here and there. "No, it doesn't bother me too much."

"Well," the nurse said, "good luck."

She went down the stairs and out past the doorman; in the fifteen minutes she had been upstairs he had lost a little of his pristine morningness, and his bow was just a fraction smaller than before.

"Taxi?" he asked, and, remembering the bus down to twenty-third street, she said "Yes."

Just as the doorman came back from the curb, bowing to the taxi he seemed to believe he had invented, she thought a hand waved to her from the crowd across the street.

She read the address on the card the dentist had given her and repeated it carefully to the taxi driver. With the card and the little slip of paper with "lower molar" written on it and her tooth identified so clearly, she sat without moving, her hands still around the papers, her eyes almost closed. She thought she must have been asleep again when the taxi stopped suddenly, and the driver, reaching around to open the door, said "Here we are lady." He looked at her curiously.

"I'm going to have a tooth pulled," she said.

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"Jesus," the taxi driver said. She paid him and he said "Good luck" as he slammed the door.

This was a strange building, the entrance flanked by medical signs carved in stone; the doorman here was faintly professional, as though he were competent to prescribe if she did not care to go any further. She went past him, going straight ahead until an elevator opened its door to her. In the elevator she showed the elevator man the card and he said "Seventh floor."

She had to back up in the elevator for a nurse to wheel in an old lady in a wheel chair. The old lady was calm and restful, sitting there in the elevator with a rug over her knees; she said "Nice day" to the elevator operator and he said "Good to see the sun," and then the old lady lay back in her chair and the nurse straightened the rug around her knees and said "Now we're not going to worry," and the old lady said irritably, "Who's worrying?"

They got out at the fourth floor. The elevator went on up and then the operator said "Seven" and the elevator stopped and the door opened.

"Straight down the hall and to your left," the operator said.

There were closed doors on either side of the hall. Some of them said "DDS," some of them said "Clinic," some of them said "X-Ray." One of them, looking wholesome and friendly and somehow most comprehensible, said "Ladies." Then she turned to the left and found a door with the name on the card and she opened it and went in. There was a nurse sitting behind a glass window, almost as in a bank, and potted palms in tubs in the corners of the waiting room, and new magazines and comfortable chairs. The nurse behind the glass window said "Yes?" as though you had overdrawn your account with the dentist and were two teeth in arrears.

She handed her slip of paper through the glass window and the nurse looked at it and said "Lower molar, yes. They called about you. Will you come right in, please? Through the door to your left."

Into the vault? she almost said, and then silently opened the door and went in. Another nurse was waiting, and she smiled and

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turned, expecting to be followed, with no visible doubt about her right to lead.

There was another X-ray, and the nurse told another nurse: "Lower molar," and the other nurse said "Come this way, please."

There were labyrinths and passages, seeming to lead into the heart of the office building, and she was put, finally, in a cubicle where there was a couch with a pillow and a wash basin and a chair.

"Wait here," the nurse said. "Relax if you can."

"I'll probably go to sleep," she said.

"Fine," the nurse said. "You won't have to wait long."

She waited probably for over an hour, although she spent the ime half-sleeping, waking only when someone passed the door; occasionally the nurse looked in and smiled, once she said "Won't have to wait much longer." Then, suddenly, the nurse was back, no longer smiling, no longer the good hostess, but efficient and hurried. "Come along," she said, and moved purposefully out of the little room into the hallways again.

Then, quickly, more quickly than she was able to see, she was sitting in the chair and there was a towel around her head and a towel under her chin and the nurse was leaning a hand on her shoulder.

"Will it hurt?" she asked.

"No," the nurse said, smiling. "You know it won't hurt, don't you?"

"Yes," she said.

The dentist came in and smiled down on her from over her head. "Well," he said.

"Will it hurt?" she said.

"Now," he said cheerfully, "we couldn't stay in business if we hurt people." All the time he talked he was busying himself with metal hidden under a towel, and great machinery being wheeled in almost silently behind her. "We couldn't stay in business at all," he said. "All you've got to worry about is telling us all your secrets while you're asleep. Want to watch out for that, you know. Lower molar?" he said to the nurse.

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"Lower molar, doctor," she said.

Then they put the metal-tasting rubber mask over her face and the dentist said "You know" two or three times absentmindedly while she could still see him over the mask. The nurse said "Relax your hands, dear," and after a long time she felt her fingers relaxing.

First of all, things get so far away, she thought, remember this. And remember the metallic sound and taste of all of it. And the outrage.

And then the whirling music, the ringing confusedly loud music that went on and on, around and around, and she was running as fast as she could down a long horribly clear hallway with doors on both sides and at the end of the hallway was Ray, holding out his hands and laughing, and calling something she could never hear because of the loud music, and she was running and then she said "I'm not afraid," and someone from the door next to her took her arm and pulled her through and the world widened alarmingly until it would never stop and then it stopped with the head of the dentist looking down at her and the window dropped into place in front of her and the nurse was holding her arm.

"Why did you pull me back?" she said, and her mouth was full of blood. "I wanted to go on."

"I didn't pull you," the nurse said, but the dentist said, "She's not out of it yet."

She began to cry without moving and felt the tears rolling down her face and the nurse wiped them off with a towel. There was no blood anywhere around except in her mouth; everything was as clean as before. The dentist was gone, suddenly, and the nurse put out her arm and helped her out of the chair. "Did I talk?" she asked suddenly, anxiously. "Did I say anything?"

"You said 'I'm not afraid,' " the nurse said soothingly. "Just as you were coming out of it."

"No," she said, stopping to pull at the arm around her. "Did I *say* anything? Did I say where he is?"

"You didn't say *any*thing," the nurse said. "The doctor was only teasing you."

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"Where's my tooth?" she asked suddenly, and the nurse laughed and said, "All gone. Never bother you again."

She was back in the cubicle, and she lay down on the couch and cried, and the nurse brought her whisky in a paper cup and set it on the edge of the washbasin.

"God has given me blood to drink," she said to the nurse, and the nurse said, "Don't rinse your mouth or it won't clot."

* * *

After a long time the nurse came back and said to her from the doorway, smiling, "I see you're awake again."

"Why?" she said.

"You've been asleep," the nurse said. "I didn't want to wake you."

She sat up; she was dizzy and it seemed that she had been in the cubicle all her life.

"Do you want to come along now?" the nurse said, all kindness again. She held out the same arm, strong enough to guide any wavering footstep; this time they went back through the long corridor to where the nurse sat behind the bank window.

"All through?" this nurse said brightly. "Sit down a minute, then." She indicated a chair next to the glass window, and turned away to write busily. "Do not rinse your mouth for two hours," she said, without turning around. "Take a laxative tonight, take two aspirin if there is any pain. If there is much pain or excessive bleeding, notify this office at once. All right?" she said, and smiled brightly again.

There was a new little slip of paper; this one said "Extraction" and underneath, "Do not rinse mouth. Take mild laxative. Two aspirin for pain. If pain is excessive or any hemorrhage occurs, notify office."

"Goodbye," the nurse said pleasantly.

"Goodbye," she said.

With the little slip of paper in her hand, she went out through the glass door and, still almost asleep, turned the corner and started down the hall. When she opened her eyes a little and saw

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that it was a long hall with doorways on either side, she stopped and then saw the door marked "Ladies" and went in. Inside there was a vast room with windows and wicker chairs and glaring white tiles and glittering silver faucets; there were four or five women around the washbasins, combing their hair, putting on lipstick. She went directly to the nearest of the three washbasins, took a paper towel, dropped her pocketbook and the little slip of paper on the floor next to her and fumbled with the faucets, soaking the towel until it was dripping. Then she slapped it against her face violently. Her eyes cleared and she felt fresher, so she soaked the paper again and rubbed her face with it. She felt out blindly for another paper towel, and the woman next to her handed her one, with a laugh she could hear, although she could not see for the water in her eyes. She heard one of the women say "Where we going for lunch?" and another one say "Just downstairs, prob'ly. Old fool says I gotta be back in half an hour."

Then she realized that at the washbasin she was in the way of the women in a hurry so she dried her face quickly. It was when she stepped a little aside to let someone else get to the basin and stood up and glanced into the mirror that she realized with a slight stinging shock that she had no idea which face was hers.

She looked into the mirror as though into a group of strangers, all staring at her or around her; no one was familiar in the group, no one smiled at her or looked at her with recognition; you'd think my own face would know me, she thought, with a queer numbness in her throat. There was a creamy chinless face with bright blond hair, and a sharp-looking face under a red veiled hat, and a colorless anxious face with brown hair pulled straight back, and a square rosy face under a square haircut, and two or three more faces pushing close to the mirror, moving, regarding themselves. Perhaps it's not a mirror, she thought, maybe it's a window and I'm looking straight through at women washing on the other side. But there were women combing their hair and consulting the mirror; the group was on her side, and she thought, I hope I'm not the blonde and lifted her hand and put it on her cheek.

She was the pale anxious one with the hair pulled back and

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when she realized it she was indignant and moved hurriedly back through the crowd of women thinking, it isn't fair, why don't I have any color in my face? There were some pretty faces there, why didn't I take one of those? I didn't have time, she told herself sullenly, they didn't give me time to think, I could have had one of the nice faces, even the blonde would be better.

She backed up and sat down in one of the wicker chairs. It's mean, she was thinking. She put her hand up and felt her hair; it was loosened after her sleep but that was definitely the way she wore it, pulled straight back all around and fastened at the back of her neck with a wide tight barette. Like a schoolgirl, she thought, only—remembering the pale face in the mirror—only I'm older than that. She unfastened the barette with difficulty and brought it around where she could look at it. Her hair fell softly around her face; it was warm and reached to her shoulders. The barette was silver; engraved on it was the name "Clara."

"Clara," she said aloud. "*Clara?*" Two of the women leaving the room smiled back at her over their shoulders; almost all the women were leaving now, correctly combed and lipsticked, hurrying out talking together. In the space of a second, like birds leaving a tree, they all were gone and she sat alone in the room. She dropped the barette into the ashstand next to her chair; the ashstand was deep and metal and the barette made a satisfactory clang falling down. Her hair down on her shoulders, she opened her pocketbook, and began to take things out, setting them on her lap as she did so. Handkerchief, plain, white, uninitialled. Compact, square and brown tortoiseshell plastic, with a powder compartment and a rouge compartment; the rouge compartment had obviously never been used, although the powder cake was half gone. That's why I'm so pale, she thought, and set the compact down. Lipstick, a rose shade, almost finished. A comb, an opened package of cigarettes and a package of matches, a change purse, and a wallet. The change purse was red imitation leather with a zipper across the top; she opened it and dumped the money out into her hand. Nickels, dimes, pennies, a quarter. Ninety-seven cents. Can't go far on that, she thought, and opened the brown

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leather wallet; there was money in it but she looked first for papers and found nothing. The only thing in the wallet was money. She counted it; there were nineteen dollars. I can go a little farther on that, she thought.

There was nothing else in the poketbook. No keys—shouldn't I have keys? she wondered—no papers, no address book, no identification. The pocketbook itself was imitation leather, light grey, and she looked down and discovered that she was wearing a dark grey flannel suit and a salmon pink blouse with a ruffle around the neck. Her shoes were black and stout with moderate heels and they had laces, one of which was untied. She was wearing beige stockings and there was a ragged tear in the right knee and a great ragged run going down her leg and ending in a hole in the toe which she could feel inside her shoe. She was wearing a pin on the lapel of her suit which, when she turned it around to look at it, was a blue plastic letter C. She took the pin off and dropped it into the ashstand, and it made a sort of clatter at the bottom, with a metallic clang when it landed on the barette. Her hands were small, with stubby fingers and no nail polish; she wore a thin gold wedding ring on her left hand and no other jewelry.

Sitting alone in the ladies room in the wicker chair, she thought, the least I can do is to get rid of these stockings. Since no one was around she took off her shoes and stripped away the stockings with a feeling of relief when her toe was released from the hole. Hide them, she thought, the paper towel wastebasket. When she stood up she got a better sight of herself in the mirror; it was worse than she had thought: the grey suit bagged in the seat, her legs were bony, and her shoulders sagged. I look fifty, she thought; and then, consulting the face, but I can't be more than thirty. Her hair hung down untidily around the pale face and with sudden anger she fumbled in the pocketbook and found the lipstick; she drew an emphatic rosy mouth on the pale face, realizing as she did so that she was not very expert at it, and with the red mouth the face looking at her seemed somehow better to her, so she opened the compact and put on pink cheeks with the rouge.

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The cheeks were uneven and patent, and the red mouth glaring, but at least the face was no longer pale and anxious.

She put the stockings into the wastebasket and went bare-legged out into the hall again, and purposefully to the elevator. The elevator operator said "Down?" when he saw her and she stepped in and the elevator carried her silently downstairs.

She went back past the grave professional doorman and out into the street where people were passing, and she stood in front of the building and waited. After a few minutes Ray came out of a crowd of people passing and came over to her and took her hand.

Somewhere between here and there was her bottle of codein pills, upstairs on the floor of the ladies' room she had left a little slip of paper headed "Extraction"; seven floors below, oblivious of the people who stepped sharply along the sidewalk, not noticing their occasional curious glances, her hand in Ray's and her hair down on her shoulders, she ran barefoot through hot sand.

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Poems and Translations

W. S. MERWIN

LOVE IN THE OLD HOUSE

Twenty years ago
The little wheels of the bed
Could not bear up to our love,
Snapped, and we lay as dead;
Then we gathered pride around,
Finished what we began,
Let outer flow and sound
Pass like unchallengened rain.
Now we must make content,
Since we have no pride left,
To be nakedly violent
On a bed that does not shift,
Under rain that will not still.
What has left us or died?
We take no joy nor are timid:
As rain breaks the roof our pride
Snapped like a shaken wheel.
I must rise to our ruin
Before we come to the proof,
Must prop, deep under rain,
Shoulder to the loud roof.

FOR D. M.

No shape in darkness single stands
And we in privacy and night
Taking surprise of love for light
Merged the dark fortunes of our hands.

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Patience of fire insists and warms
Through dust, through dusty bone the breath;
The ear and intellect of death
Direct of love the heated forms.

Sitting on stones we kiss to please
Some stilled remembrance that shares our blood,
And warmth whose shape and name were dead
From ruin moving amends our peace.

CHANSON

Never man caught could muster fit excuse
Lithe to the tongue to parry his distress,
Yet for my comfort I can song devise;
Now giftless hangs of many friends the grace
While I in shame and hopeless of release
Am these two winters held.

Well my knight can recall, and my sworn man,
Englishman, Norman, Gascon, Poitevin,
How I have let no least companion
Lie wasting thus for long his heart in prison.
Pride forbids arguments of worth and ransom,
But still, I am close held.

Ah, I know well enough that in the end,
By death locked up, I shall find parent nor friend
Helpful with gold or capable dear hand.
More than myself I mourn who to me bend
And may, after my death, need, and none lend
While closed I lie, and held.

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Count it no marvel that my heart is rent
Now Philip cramps my kingdom in torment,
But were he minded of the covenant
Once we together made by joined consent
I could expect no pain long continent
Nor long in shame lie held.

This though they know, Angevin and Torraine,
Unmarried men whose gold and faith are fine,
Love hides so hampered help cannot be shown,
And past touch of their love fast am I down.
Light from bare swords bent I see flood the plain
Who meantime am close held.

Companions whom old love has held this late,
To you of Caen and Percherain I write,
Long vexed: may song call constancy to sight;
I have dealt no one falsely or in spite
And who shows faithless now is base past hate
For straightly am I held.

Countess and sister, to your fame may the lord
Whose prisoner I stay, to whom is spurred
My prayer, guard you and hold.

To the mother of Louys I send no word
I have here told.

—from the French of Richard I of England

LES AMOURS XIII

As often a fire that's laid too close by ferns
Fastens at whim among the fern-bushes,
Or, finding wheatfields where a wind runs loose,
In fury of light limbs hurdles and burns,

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As the attendant youngsters of his race
Will filter all the wood in finding out
Where, gnarled in bole or root, the pastor heat
Holds separate from their less canny pace:
So will love tindered in close innocence
Leap often boundless past its own surprise,
And it were wiser my pen here should stop
Than, running, semble a man small of sense
Who in the play and boredom of his house
Spurred off a flame that he could not rein up.

—from DuBellay

DEDICATION OF A MIRROR TO VENUS

I, that for letting a smile's favor
Loose from my youth in a light hour
Would with suitors' press and fervor
Find my doorway darkened over,
Now to Venus, for her to keep,
The promised mirror tender up,
For the shape which of late I wear
Is such as will not bear review
And the face once this surface knew
Stirs no such shadows any more.

—from Baif

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Partisan Review and American Writing

WILLIAM ARROWSMITH

LET ME BEGIN WITH A GENERALIZATION: as writers and critics, we are notoriously obsessed with the conditions of writing in America: has it grown increasingly academic? is the cultural schism unbridgeable? are commitments possible in a valueless society? etc. I repeat the generalization only to pronounce our obsession irrelevant to the kind of literature we shall probably get —unless, that is, we can manage to transform our queries into something more constructive than the descriptive and statistical analyses they have entailed to date. Yet the query as to whether you, as a writer, can or can no longer afford commitments is, it would seem, a part of the décor of our time: one cannot, after all, imagine Aeschylus or Racine asking themselves whether they could afford commitments. But these queries about one's commitments do seem to me to be very much at the root of our barren obsession with the conditions of writing; and, if the conclusions reached are negative, so too is the outlook for American writing. Certainly we shall not better a bad situation until we can manage to make some sort of creative adjustment come into play between what convictions we have and the very ugly public situation in writing.

If such is the case, it seems to me that the editors of *Partisan Review* have done American writing a serious disservice. Quite regretfully, I omit the apologies which normally accompany such a charge: PR has done its services as well as it disservices, but one is compelled to state quite unequivocally that the balance stands in need of redress. Since 1943-1944 PR has sadly fallen off: to

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my mind, this falling-off has occurred because PR has subscribed editorially to a number of attitudes toward literature and the writer in America which can only confuse and darken counsel. This deterioration needs to be closely examined, for PR avows itself to be not only the "best" serious magazine in America, but also the largest.

Originally an organ of the John Reed Club of New York, PR rebelled in 1937 against the doctrinaire literary authority of the Communist Party and disclaimed "obligation to any of its organized political expressions." The rupture with Stalinism was violent and, although the editors retained their Marxist orientations, the magazine was geared to a more literary sensibility than had previously obtained. As a magazine, however, PR has only rarely managed to resolve its dual nature, part political, part literary, though at times its critics have managed to make the bridge with a cautious social approach to literature. Editorial conflict naturally arose as to which aspect of this dual nature was paramount, and in 1943 Dwight Macdonald left PR in high political dudgeon. PR's only literary man, Delmore Schwartz, replaced Macdonald on the board and the editors asserted that the modulation of socialist ideas with literature would remain the policy of the magazine.

Throughout its history, PR has retained its cultural-Marxist orientation, sniping occasionally at those writers whose politics it disliked—Eliot, Tate, etc.—but remaining acute enough to print their work. Belligerently secular, it often permitted its enthusiasm for socialism to outrun its editors' sagacity and even to try its readers' patience. (I refer to the endless Burnham-Macdonald-Hook exchanges.) Until recently, its literary standards remained high, it was remarkably representative, and it has always showed extraordinary devotion to printing the work of younger writers. Critically more narrow-minded, it showed much bad taste, often indulging in vindictive polemic to ensure a spurious liveliness. Against the Stalinists and the literary lowbrow, it fought a good cultural and political battle, although of late it has sported its anti-Stalinism as a kind of badge of literary virtue. Its diagnosis

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of its own role and its attempt to fulfill that role have always seemed to me thoroughly obtuse, although it has indisputably achieved more liveliness than most serious American reviews.

Shortly after 1943, however, it became apparent that PR had changed; for there gradually crept into the magazine a host of attitudes which I cannot remember as having been more than residual previously. Most of these attitudes were ultimately connected with the concept of the artist and the artist's relation to society. What they stated was a curious Freudian-Marxist extension of current popular ideas of the artist: if the bourgeois is the political and cultural norm, the artist is abnormal. So far, granted. But the next step was to take the leap from abnormality to neurosis, burdening their definitions with the psychological concept of "sickness" and "disease." The artist is necessarily "sick," the arguments ran, and for those who believed in the relevance of an artist's health and adjustment to his work, the examples of Baudelaire, Rimbaud and even of Henry James were cited. Alienation now became the desirable, the necessary, condition of art. And in order to be consistent a definition of modern art was framed which excluded those who had managed, by some strategy or other, to overcome or exercise the very real alienation of the American artist. The final step was to alienate the writer from his past (for the past is less secular than socialism, more adjusted than dissident, and patently un-Marxist), and a new alliance was formed with what was called Europe but what looked more and more like Jean-Paul Sartre.

It is easy to document the progression of these attitudes. Arthur Koestler, in an article on *The Intelligentsia*, gives the first articulate statement:

> Even for the 'real' intelligentsia, neurosis is an almost inevitable correlate . . . the pressure of the environment cramps art as it cramps behaviour. One may challenge this environment, but one has to pay for it, and the price is neurotic guilt. There never was an intelligentsia without a guilt-complex. . . . Those who attack the intelligentsia for its neurotic dispositions might as well attack the miners for their susceptibility to T.B. It is a professional disease and should be recognized as such, without scorn or shame.

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These are bald words but they are editorially unsupported until we connect them with PR's sense of overt alienation and its definition of the true artist's condition: an abstract dissidence with particular persecutions. (William Phillips, *The Intellectuals' Tradition*, PR, Nov.-Dec., 1941; *A Reply to T. S. Eliot*, PR, Summer, 1944.) Alienation is the key concept to understanding PR; for if, as Phillips asserts, "the most advanced sections of the élite tend to be radical, dissident and uncompromising" (this and nothing more), it was the curious logic of later articles to insist that alienation is the desirable terminus of artistic behaviour. It remained only for a host of amateur psychoanalysts like Koestler to give the progression a final fillip: alienation is guilt and guilt is neurosis; neurosis is the professional disease of the artist. The heresy now gathers momentum from issue to issue, from review to review.[1] The note perpetually struck is alienation, not regretful, but virtuous in its obsessive probing. Dr. Rosenzweig, for instance, in a case-study of Henry James:

> At the age of eighteen . . . Henry sustained a persistent physical injury. A keen sense of created impotence, combined with a possible suspicion of unconscious malingering now crystaillized his early sense of inferiority into "castration anxiety". . . . His writings served him both as an escape from frustration by way of fantasy and as a partial means of solving his problems through sublimation.

Or Mr. Barrett, a neo-Freudian:

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[1]For those who wish to document this heresy more fully, I would suggest the following: Philip Rahv, *Concerning Tolstoy*, Sept.-Oct., 1946; Robert Gorham Davis, *Art and Anxiety*, Summer, 1945; Sigmund Freud, *Dostoevsky and Parricide*, Fall, 1945; Georges Blin, *The Gash*, Spring, 1946; Merleau-Ponty, *Cézanne's Doubt*, Sept.-Oct., 1946; William Phillips, *Dostoevsky's Underground Man*, Nov.-Dec., 1946; William Barrett, *Writers and Madness*, Jan.-Feb., 1947; ibid., *Dialogue on Anxiety*, March-April, 1947; Leslie Fiedler, *Come Back to the Raft Ag'in, Huck Honey*, June, 1948; contribution to the Symposium, *The State of American Writing*, 1948; August, 1948. Cf. also William Barrett, *Notes on Being an American*, *Horizon*, 93-4, Oct., 1947 as well as articles already cited above. The one contribution which has challenged the tenor of these articles is by Lionel Trilling, *Art and Neurosis*, PR, Winter, 1945. Its common-sense is so relevant to the discussion that I cannot refrain from citing part of it: "Of the whole artist we may say that whatever elements of neurosis he has in common with his fellow-citizens, the one part of him that is healthy, by any possible definition of health, is that which gives him the power to conceive, to plan, to work, and to bring his work to completion. It would be impossible to deny that whatever disease or mutilation the artist may suffer is an element of his work which conditions every part of it. . . . But disease and mutilation are available to all of us—life provides them with prodigal generosity. What marks the artist is his power to shape and control the raw material we all have."

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> Here at last we come close to the secret: if one characteristic of neurosis is always a displacement somewhere, then perhaps the test of a writer's achievement may be precisely the extent and richness of displacement he is able to effect.

If this is a secret, it is the secret of a private predicament, that of Mr. Barrett and his confrères, although I suspect that the secret masks a rationalization and a subterfuge as vast as that which it seems to unmask. Psychoanalytical tools can cut in two directions, after all; it is the see-saw of motives perpetually robbing each other which must inevitably make minds like Mr. Barrett's the dupes of their own dogmas.

What I question here, however, is not the final ambivalence of Freudian interpretation but the relevance of such insights to our common cultural predicament. For, as Trilling has acutely pointed out, the myth of the neurotic artist gives the Philistine the tremendous advantage both of ignoring and of distorting what the artist says, for the neurotic relation to reality seems unstable at the same time that it fascinates. And, I would add, its popularity among artists resides precisely in its ability to become an insulation against indifference as well as a rationalization for impoverished writing or for not writing at all. The counterpart, after all, of PR's intensely alienated, neurotic, "Jewish," dissident artist is nothing but the insane titan, the tragic buffoon, of popular and lowbrow culture. The irony, for PR, need not be pushed: I only question what seems to me an ugly reversion to a nineteenth-century form of alienation and compensation. We only deceive ourselves by thinking that compulsive recital of what obstructs us or gets in the way of our work is a fruitful preoccupation. It is not, and we do ourselves no service by obscuring the perpetually moral problem of writing well with the sociological and psychological accidents of our time. Certainly there is no reason for optimism in the state of current culture, but to falsify alternatives, to generalize *all* artistic impulse into neurosis, and to exalt the role of creator at the expense of our wretched contributory laity is a gross and empty-hearted procedure. Alienation there is, but I doubt that there has been any persecu-

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tion as such; and alienation is less a badge of distinction than the traditional hard ground most art has had for growing.

Clearly you cannot write, if you believe that writing is impossible. Some artists, I would agree, thrive on being "snookered" and prevented, but for most of us the only enabling factor is an act of will, and the temptations to feeding on that will are already sufficiently great. The real peril, surely, is not so much that artists are foully fed upon but that, as artists, they feed on themselves. Hence I find it superfluous and irrelevant that Mr. Barrett, for instance, should hypostatize *The Enemy*—"the tweedy professors of English, the Book-of-the-Month Club businessmen," etc. For these gentlemen, I have no more admiration than Mr. Barrett, but I cannot see that his sense of persecution is more than trivially relevant. Trilling has put it neatly: "If the writer is to vanish, it is appropriate that he vanish in maledictions rather than in a self-commiserative sociological analysis of the discrepancy between his function and his fate."

It is no doubt possible to describe PR as topical and modernist, dissident and lively—and to do it justice. But I thoroughly distrust Mr. Phillips' assertion that an élite (like PR) is necessarily more concerned with the making of a new tradition than with the preservation of the old one. The two are the same: you cannot retain an old tradition without recreating it and hence incrementing it. Yet the philistinism of PR's editors is the fashion nowadays. At almost any gathering of young intellectuals in New York it is possible to verify its popularity: unread writers, writers who know more of Kafka and Juenger than they do of Spenser or Shakespeare, who suspect the burden of their tradition as something academic. Such belligerent and energetic ignorance can, I think, be expected in certain circles: it is part of the romantic intellectual's experience and it goes hand in hand with the terrible illiteracy of our system of universal education. More and more, American writers come rather late to their real work. Hence it is particularly depressing to see a serious magazine sponsor our illiteracy and extend our alienation. I refer, of course, to the fact that, in its fourteen years of existence, PR has published no full-

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scale article on any literary figure prior to the last half of the nineteenth-century. This is topicality with a vengeance or it is a measure of the self-righteous ignorance of Phillips and Rahv. Finally, it should be pointed out that when PR speaks of the past, it requires a rather cute condescension. Mr. Barrett, for instance, habitually refers to Plato and Aristotle as "old Plato," "old Aristotle." I find this lively.

Again, speaking of the complexity of modern art, Mr. Barrett writes: "After Proust, no one can write about love with the old charming simplicity of Prévost. It would be pastiche: archaic and unauthentic." I am struck more by the pairing of the two adjectives, the immense contempt for the past which they carry, than by the general inanity of the remark. The statement, however, is certainly not meaningful: to believe it, you must share Mr. Barrett's notions about the progressive complexity of literature as well as his belief in the progressive values of literature. In what sense, except a meaningless one, Proust has made a modern Prévost impossible, I cannot say, unless we believe, quite spuriously, that the simplicity of Prévost is a charming falsehood and the psychological complexity of Proust is nearer the truth, more authentic. If we state it this way, it is quite possible to observe Mr. Barrett's literalist psychological approach to literature: Prévost is impossible precisely because Proust has cancelled forever the insight and the décor which made Prévost possible, outdated him psychologically. No one, including myself, would prefer Prévost to Proust; I question only the assertion that a complex psychology such as Proust's makes impossible, outmodes or defeats a simpler psychology in the hands of a writer of equal but differently oriented sensibility. The complexity, the richness, are all present in the second writer as well as the first, but they are differently ordered and perceived, and equally authentic. Consider Euripides and Aeschylus; or James and Hardy.

Implicit in PR's attitudes toward the past is its definition of modern art—the phrase is Mr. Phillips'—"our urban, alienated, skeptical, self-indulgent art." The definition is right, it must be admitted, for *Partisan Review*. But in general these adjectives will

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not, I think, describe Eliot or Frost or Tate; they are meaningless for Warren, Robinson and Ransom, inapplicable to Faulkner and Mann, inaccurate of Trilling, Porter, Blackmur and a dozen representative others. I do not object strenuously to the definition, for PR has usually had more sense than to apply it rigidly. But we do need the definition to understand PR's persistent recent bias for the work of Schwartz, Berryman, Fiedler, Jarrell and Hardwick, to name the core of what seems to be a definable group. What this group shares in common has been stated often enough: their age, their common experience of alienation and disillusion, as well as standards somewhat similar; their work is—"urban, alienated, skeptical, self-indulgent." While I cannot share PR's obvious enthusiasm for these writers, nor find real quarrel with the sensibility of the group (often honest and always desperate), I do deplore PR's tendency to employ the marginal experience of these writers as a norm—the tendency, that is, to make the Stalinist adventure and subsequent disillusion one step in an artistic *cursus honorum*, to accentuate the necessity of alienation, and even to equate intellectuality with neurosis. This is a grievous propaganda and its end-result, I would guess, would be the intolerable literature of an impossible subject-matter. Already, it seems to me the burdens of such a pressure are evident in the anti-stylistic fiction of Mr. Schwartz, the manic posture of Mr. Berryman's prose and the Werther-like criticisms of Mr. Fiedler. Or again, in the tape-measure of Mr. Barrett: "William Faulkner moves me more powerfully than any other American novelist because he seems actually to incarnate the alienation in American life at its deepest level . . . "

If I have thus far avoided specific criticism of individual contributors to PR, it was to cast up for inspection the general critical approach and the central attitudes which characterize PR. These seem to me to be the pivot of my own impatience with the magazine, although there is much in the way of general criticism and individual reviewing which can be protested. I am particularly irritated, for instance, with the witty emptiness of Mary McCarthy's drama criticism, her tremendous obsessive con-

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tempt for those unworthy (or worthy, for that matter) of it, and her persistent refusal to negotiate with dramatic commonsense. Leslie Fiedler's treatment of Frost in a recent review was both vicious and unnecessary, altogether the kind of criticism that we have come to associate with PR. I have never understood why PR has continued to publish Wylie Sypher or allowed Clement Greenberg to make clear his literary incompetence. Nor does one grasp the import of the musical anachronisms committed in the recent *Atonal Trail*. It is with real pleasure, however, that I record my gratitude to PR for its publication of Trilling. Along with Hannah Arendt's piece on the concentration camps, Trilling's deft and witty discussion of the Kinsey Report stands out as the best PR has managed to publish this year. What remains so important about Trilling is his vast good sense, his real grasp of literary intelligence and his stature as a creative writer: these qualities are infrequently combined, especially in PR, where it seems possible to write well only at the expense of making sense.

But the real responsibility for PR's defects belongs not so much to individual contributors as to the editors, chiefly Rahv and Phillips and Barrett, the most vocal of the editors. Now I cannot believe that Rahv or Phillips or Barrett are generally regarded as being primarily men-of-letters; they are editors, neither more nor less, and PR is the record of their tastes and convictions. A survey of their writing shows us much misdirected energy, considerable political honesty and literary sincerity. Yet their sensibilities are badly deficient (Phillips' more so than Rahv's), their taste is vitiated by awkward usage of irrelevant Marxist criteria, and, stylistically, they use a rude clutter of jargon and literary bombast. All, I find, are incompetent critics of literature and surprisingly ignorant students of history—surprising, because as Marxists they presumably were nursed in the bowels of time. Thus, much as an ignorance of historical élites invalidates Phillips' notes on the role of the modern intelligentsia, so a similar cultural ignorance distorts Rahv's essays on American and Russian writers. Again, that much good can come of the unqualified "cultural bolshevism" to which the editors aspire, I doubt, if only because

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none of them have as yet shown the ability to inform their "dissidence" and their desiderated alienation with a coherent statement of its risks and advantages or with any insight into the imaginative process. Let me cite in evidence of this charge Mr. Greenberg's mindless assertion that a cheap popular culture is compatible with a religious society but incompatible with socialism. Or Mr. Rahv's histrionic sense of persecution: "The nationalist reaction in American writing is . . . part and parcel of the world-wide campaign against cultural bolshevism." If dissidence is desirable we need to know (what Rahv has never taught us) the quality of dissidence; if we dislike an "academic" literature, the alternative is not bohemianism, but an educated literature.

PR is, in this connection, a rope of sand. Its editorial policy is presumably existential, related to crisis, but I cannot discover in what way it is relevant to our trouble. Unrelated to the past, it correctly attempts a connection with Europe, but the quality of its European coverage has so far been shallow and barren. One has often the suspicion that Europe has been cast more in the mould of *Partisan Review* than vice versa, that the Europe we see in PR is a distorted mirror of a marginal group of American bohemians. "I propose," says William Barrett, "to make capital of my estrangement, and my way of being American shall be to appropriate whatever in Europe I can and want." Precisely, one agrees, but why is Barrett so irrepressibly the intellectual tourist, the purveyor of the European gimcracks and bric-a-brac which PR so persistently publishes?

The answer, if we wish one, is not far to find, and will take us eventually to a reconsideration of our need to discover some kind of creative adjustment at play between our convictions and our society. In a way, the recent fol-de-rol about Pound states the predicament; for it is an empty pursuit to argue the question of Pound's wrongness or rightness or that of his "society." What is demonstrable with Pound is that artistically he has always lived among a number of uninhabitable convictions, convictions in the end no more habitable than those in which his "society" lives, and

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eventually just as cowardly and self-defeating. This failure of commonsense can, I think, be traced out in detail in Pound's work, just as it can be seen forming in Samuel Butler, or, more vehemently, in Henry Miller. Others have made it work, but Swift's was a perilous example and it was never the whole game with him or, for that matter, with his society. It will be protested that I am suggesting the artist should "bend," should come to terms with the standards of his society and so be submerged or murdered. I am not; what, however, I do suggest is that the problem for the artist is one of knowing where his real independence and his advantage lie. They do not lie with our vocal cultural bolshevists.

For it seems curious to me that our artists have shown so little real independence and so small a willingness to take the customary imaginative risks, risks which might, after all, be worth the candle. How many, for instance, have ventured poetic drama? or any extended form? Why have so many missed the import of Penn Warren's achievement, or Trilling's, in the novel, the insight that a corrupted genre is infinitely repossessable if you can manage to bring something to it, can manage to compose, that is, in the convention of the debased novel? Warren's success is less a quirk of luck than we might suppose; rather it seems to me a willful recreation of a form we thought unusable, an adjustment not to the standards of popular culture but to its forms, the only adjustment by which we can preserve the identity of the élite and the coherence of the whole body. Certainly we pursue the road of least resistance when, with PR, we abandon our independence and our proper perils by succumbing to the cracking process and virtuously washing our hands of our laity, the past, and commonsense.

[*This is the first in a series of articles on contemporary literary magazines.*]

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Two Poems

DONALD F. DRUMMOND

LONG TERM PROPHECY

Beyond the Red Sea rose a plain
Where Moses saw the heathen slain
He stood above them with the Rod
Outthrust, a man commanding God;
His arms drooped and the banners trailed,
The hosts of Amalek prevailed,
He raised his arms, the heathen fled
Across a desert wet and red.

But for the mind's drift is no shore
No reef of coral breaks the floor
Of ocean where that coral grew
Before the atom broke in two:
Hallucination by degrees
Has blown the palm fronds from the trees,
Hallucination measured by
Geiger counters in the sky:

No lesser magic, these alarms
Than from old Moses' trembling arms,
Since when his elbows quake we feel
Rapid encroachment of the real
Beyond our measured senses, know
Why law and magic make it grow:
Till with the foetus flames the rake,
Till with the woman burns the snake.

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And in our general order then
Is neither man nor nitrogen,
And where the Geiger counters range
Destruction synonyms with change:
And rotting protoplasm's smell
Affords a preview into hell
Where ancient Moses, stiff and sore
Can hold out aching arms no more.

EPITAPH FOR A RENO WOMAN

(For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.
—St. Luke 18:25)

A pound of flesh, a pound of gold,
Are each my life, and each is old;
And neither worth the other's loss:
The heart needs gold to give it gloss
And no gold gleams without the Heart:
In each the other's counterpart.
And though rich women force that gate
They do not bear my double weight.

The great she-camel's stomachs swell:
She trots on madly by to hell.
And though I diet endlessly
My mind has fixed the width of me;
The narrow gate called Needle's Eye,
Exacts its penance, though I die:
For heaven gained, sans gold or touch
For two-humped beasts is not worth much.

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The Hivinizikis

(from *Voyage to Great Garaban*)

HENRI MICHAUX

ALWAYS IN A HURRY, ahead of themselves, feverish, running hither and yon, busy, they might even lose their hands. It's impossible to give them a somewhat lasting pleasure.

Enthusiastic, impetuous and keyed-up, but always for a short time, butterfly-diplomats, placing landmarks everywhere which they forget, with a police and general staff who have dozens of extremely ingenious secret codes on hand and never know which one to use, who change sides and double-cross each other constantly.

Gamblers (busy from morning to night throwing dice for their entire fortunes, which change hands from one second to the next until they don't know who the debtor is, or who the creditor), card sharps, tricksters, muddlers, not because of confusion and muddy thinking, but because of a host of clarities springing out of the question at issue, unbridled logicians, but riddled with intuitive subterfuges and loopholes, proving existence and non-existence and in general anything you please and don't please, through reasoning, through non-reasoning, through reasonings based on non-reasonings, absent-minded but cunning and almost tireless, entering (but only for a few hours) bed and sleep at the same time, leaving them the same way, like opening and closing a door, getting mad about nothing, diverted from their anger by less than nothing, by a buzzing fly, spread out like a sail to every wind, very sincerely in tears at their father's bedside, but the moment his eyes are closed rushing to the will, arguing over the inheritance, sitting on the bed which is still warm, burying him in a jiffy (it's a

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good idea, too; otherwise they'd forget him until he began to stink).

Prostrating themselves before their gods hundreds of times like mechanisms that have been wound up all the way, then bounding off without looking back; loving just as they worship, quickly, ardently, "and then let's say no more about it," marrying without premeditation, thanks to some chance encounter, without a moment's delay, and divorcing the same way, without any family life, working and selling or plying their trade right in the street, in the midst of wind and dust and kicking horses; talking like a machine gun in action; on horseback as often as possible, and galloping, or if they're on foot, with arms thrust out as if they were finally set on releasing and unclogging for good this Universe, so full of difficulties and incidents, which keeps presenting itself before them.

Even in the law courts they have never succeeded in maintaining a really balanced frame of mind.

The Presiding Justice, about to judge a criminal, loses his nerve: "I don't quite see," he says. "Let's suppose I am the criminal!" He asks for a knife, reenacts the murder, gets worried, leaves, returns, flees, gets arrested by the police, and not infrequently the defendant uses the occasion to take to his heels, sometimes in the Presiding Justice's clothing.

For the latter takes his part in earnest, and removes his judicial robes. "I am just a simple criminal," he says, and the police thrash him soundly, and these lay on the others' skins so effectively that nobody really knows who is involved or what is the matter; the overzealous magistrate is stoned by the crowd for the horrible murder which he confesses and shamelessly reenacts. The witnesses, naturally well satisfied to see everything clearing up, solemnly swear that he is the one they saw break into the house where the crime was committed, and they demand immediate execution.

Another time the prisoner affirms: "Your honor, I hardly squeezed at all, see, only like this." Meanwhile he has clenched

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his hands around the neck of the Presiding Justice, who pulls away half-dead and incapable of pronouncing judgment. But the crowd, losing its patience at watching this spectacle which they haven't understood, demands that the pair of them—these damned wranglers—be sent to prison for years. The lawyers who have made everything complicated are thrown out the door, and the court room empties in a thunderclap.

The Hivinizikis are always outdoors. They cannot stay home. If you see someone inside, he doesn't live there. No doubt about it, he's visiting a friend. Every door is open, everybody is some place else.

The Hiviniziki lives in the street. The Hiviniziki lives on horseback. He will wear out three in a day. Always astraddle, always galloping—there you have the Hiviniziki.

This rider, dashing forward at full speed, suddenly stops short. A passing girl's beauty has just caught his eye. He instantly swears eternal love to her, asks her parents, who pay no attention to him, calls upon the whole street to witness his love, talks immediately of cutting his throat if she is not turned over to him, and cudgels his servant to lend more weight to his declaration. But his wife passes in the street, and in his mind the recollection that he is already married. Thereupon, baffled but not cooled, he turns away, takes up his course again with flying hooves, makes for a friend's, finds only the friend's wife there. "Oh, life!" he says; he burst into tears; she hardly knows him; nevertheless she consoles him, they console each other, he kisses her. "Oh don't refuse," he begs her, "I'm practically at my last breath." He throws her into the bed like a bucket into a well, and he, all athirst for love, oblivion! oblivion! but suddenly he is regalvanized into action, makes the door in a single leap, his clothes still unbuttoned, or else she cries out tearfully: "You haven't said you loved my eyes, you haven't said anything to me!" The emptiness which follows love projects them into its void; she has the horses harnessed and the carriage prepared. "Oh, what have I done! My eyes were

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so lovely once, so lovely—he hasn't said one word to me about them! I must be off to the farm at once, to see if the wolf has eaten a sheep; I feel a presentiment almost."

And her carriage carries her off in a jiffy, but not to *her* sheep, for they've all been gambled and lost by her husband that morning—the country house, the fields, and everything except the wolf which wasn't staked. She herself has been staked . . . and lost and so here she is arriving worn out at her new master's.

During the speeches of the opposition, which would of course be tedious to listen to, a dinner is given in the restaurant of the Chamber to the Chief of State, the senior Deputy, and the Deputies of his party.

It has always been felt that the Chief of State liked, aside from carp (which according to him is beyond everything else), to have some diversions within his reach, such as a violin, which he really is excellent at (he is not so good at the flute), some modelling clay in different colors, a little indoor bow or some darts which he aims at the deputies' manes.

The principal guest, the senior Deputy of the Chamber, is frequently out of sight for a few minutes, going off to take the air, to run after a dog, to throw a few pebbles in the air.

Each acts in his own fashion, without regard to precedence.

But some argument of the opposition suddenly disturbs the dinner, upsets it. The Chief of State jumps for the door, interrupts the orator, argues with his mouth still full, while his doctor, who has been observing him for a few moments between two mouthfuls, discovering in him some symptom or other of disease, absolutely insists on listening to his chest.

The Chief of State throws himself vehemently into his speech, vehemently but in his underwear, while the doctor, baring his chest, begs him: "Breathe deeper, try, I can't hear you!"

Meanwhile in come the cooks, annoyed that nobody has touched the leg of lamb or the chicken; they come in bearing steaming meats, bring in plates too, stuff biscuits into friendly pockets

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and raise their hands to vote for the first law that is proposed. Owing to their support the government party prevails.

The people outside, when they learn the outcome, demonstrate exuberantly, rapturous at being wisely ruled.

A delegation from the crowd which comes to tender congratulations finds only yelling and bickering. Seeing that it has been tricked again, it roars to those outside to come quickly and take revenge on the blockhead Deputies.

The women, who run up at once, denounce them before the nation as impotent men and cuckolds.

As I in my turn came in, curious and questioning, the woman—a big brunette full of magnetism—who was directing the rebels, suddenly changed her mood. "You little silly!" she said to me with a coaxing smile, "come over here, you'll be much happier on my breast," and she led me into an empty corridor.

At the Grand Maneuvers a general wins a battle and puts the enemy to flight, and then, no longer aware which camp he belongs to, lets himself be conquered by a miserable enemy rearguard which he fancied to be his own.

But a captain notices the predicament before it becomes a catastrophe, warns the general, restores the victory, then forgets his men in a ditch, and dashes off in pursuit of a stag which he fancied he saw far off.

The soldiers in their turn forget that they are at war and let themselves be enticed by the wenches or by some disreputable bartender who hails them from his door and offers the first round on the house.

Were it not for the rare strategy of the Hivinizikis, this would be very dangerous, but they are unmatchable strategists. All the cultivated people there are strategists.

These nonchalant gentlemen whom you see picking pears in that orchard, and stuffing their mouths with them, are not simple thieves. They are two (Sunday) colonels; they are waiting for the result of a smart trap they have laid. And these colonels are the one an actor, the other a priest.

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But on this holiday they devote themselves to the national passion for strategy.

When they have only a little time at their disposal, they play with soccer balls. There you need an astute captain to direct operations! None of your little European scuffles. No, but huge games on rough terrain, with a hundred men and seven or eight balls, taking place in the evening if possible.

Not even cats' eyes could see in time the groups of players running around. They play by the sound.

At the theatre the actors start off with a comedy, glide into the second act of a serious drama, get onto another play from their repertory, conclude with a brilliant improvisation.

It's true that you can't depend upon all the companies for such fine stuff, which requires of the actors a sense of adaptability close to genius, and is consequently much sought after.

But whatever theatre you go to, there is a terrific moving about in the audience as well as on the stage.

Leaving the hall as soon as their favorite actors make their exits, returning as soon as they make their entrances again in one of the later scenes, each following his personal preferences, slipping like eels along the packed rows, bounding outside as though burnt, the stir created by the spectators is indescribable. You have to have been there to know it. Outside, when the door is open (and it is opened and closed continually like an engine valve), you hear the stamping of horses. For if the Hivinizikis have ten minutes between two acts, up they jump on their horses and gallop with hooves flying to some rendezvous.

The moment they return, they're back in their seats, crying "encore" and "another encore" for simple repartees that their neighbors scorn and hiss just as excitedly.

Some young enthusiasts climb up on the stage and positively insist on kneeling down before the heroine, and fight among themselves over who should get closest to her.

The play continues, always at great speed, and before the kneeling man rises ten or fifteen years have passed, maybe more, the

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young woman is now a grandmother, somebody has just brought her a white wig.

Another time, transported by the account of her misfortunes, devoured by the drama, she feels the drama of *her* life take possession of her. One sorrow attracts the other. She imagines herself at the death of her mother, she is covered with cold sweat, then at the departure of her lover, "you used to say you would love me forever, and off you go with even the stockings you gave me." And as if that were not enough, why, there's the traitor, going out the door of the set. At this apex of misfortune she frightens herself with such genuine horror that the whole first row put their hands to their whips. And the young infatuated spectator, unable to remain in a state of constant apprehension, leaps forward to thrash the traitor. The latter, although he acts in a dignified way, is thrown headlong into the orchestra, making a great crash with musical undertones.

[*Translated by Richard Ellmann*]

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Notes on the Joseph *Novels**

FREDERICK MORGAN

THE QUESTION MAY WELL BE RAISED at the outset: what can a comparatively short critical essay accomplish in dealing with a work as vast in scope, as full of reverberations and implications, as informed (but not overweighed) with erudition as Thomas Mann's tetralogy of *Joseph and His Brothers?* For the work is complex indeed, so that for the reader who begins to penetrate its symbolism the experience is rather like finding himself in a world of handsomely framed and brightly polished mirrors, inter-reflecting endlessly the equivocal images of light and darkness. Of all twentieth-century novelists only Joyce makes comparable demands of the intelligence of his readers. The *Joseph* novels have received no definitive critical evaluation in this country (and I doubt whether they have abroad), and are not likely to for some time to come. For, in general, they have not been absorbed. Harry Slochower has made a valiant attempt at exegesis; his book† has perhaps a certain introductory usefulness but offers on the whole little that is not already obvious to the attentive reader, and is further limited for having been written prior to the publication of *Joseph the Provider,* thus failing to take into account the shift of perspective in the final volume. William Troy and Philip Blair Rice, in essays‡ of a more general ambition, have contributed in-

*This is the second in a series of articles on Thomas Mann's work. A subsequent article will discuss the new novel, *Doctor Faustus* (Alfred A. Knopf), Chapter VIII of which appeared in the Autumn issue of *The Hudson Review* with the title *Lectures of Wendell Kretschmar.*

†*Thomas Mann's Joseph Story* by Harry Slochower. Knopf.

‡*Thomas Mann: Myth and Reason* by William Troy. *Partisan Review,* June and July, 1938. *Thomas Mann and the Religious Revival* by Philip Blair Rice. *Kenyon Review,* Summer 1941. The latter essay is reprinted in *The Stature of Thomas Mann,* edited by Charles Neider. (New Directions.)

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sights into the *Joseph* books that seem of more permanent value. But, on the whole, contemporary criticism has done very little with Thomas Mann. On the one hand, he has received a great deal of uncritical adulation from persons more or less incompetent; on the other, he has been neglected by many of our best critics, who apparently find his work uncongenial. By this inconsistency of approach, we run the risk of leaving Mann in the limbo of writers who are admired politely from a distance but not intelligently read, a fate he is far from deserving. The present essay will seek to throw Mann's methods into clear relief, and to suggest a perspective for reconsidering the American novel. As exegesis, it will necessarily be incomplete; but it may have a certain usefulness in mapping out territory still to be explored.

It is at once a commonplace and the basic insight into this novelist to insist on the inner dualism of his work and the dialectical bent of his thought. Thomas Mann is the outstanding practitioner of the "dialectical novel," by which is meant a work of fiction based upon an underlying complex of ideas, the ideas themselves, in their dialectical relationship, providing the work with its structure and its dramatic tension. This *genre* differs from allegory in that the ideas of themselves form no final pattern, but are held in meaningful conflict. One is never justified, as I hope to make clear in what follows, in assigning a single unequivocal meaning to any of Mann's major symbols; their meaning points in more than one direction, as determined by the underlying dialectic. To compare Mann with a writer like Kafka, for example, is to find the latter much farther along the road to allegory, and thereby less of a novelist. The following analysis of *Joseph and His Brothers,* made in accordance with certain conceptual relationships that seem basic to the work, may throw light on the complexity of Mann's dialectic and the thoroughness of his methods. It should be understood that the list does not pretend to be exhaustive; that the separation into headings is arbitrary, for purposes of analysis, and that just as all of these relationships are interwoven in the novel, it will be necessary for me to show them as interacting, even as I discuss them separately.

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God and Man. This relationship is the basic concern of the novel. Mann has referred to the work as a "symbol of humanity"; the story itself is a part of that vast tapestry of destiny known as the "God-story." The variations here are endless, but they all stem from the interplay of the concepts of God as Creator of man, and of Man as creator of gods—a dualism that is exemplified, incidentally, in the relationship of the artist to his work; for the artist is "god-like" in relation to what he "creates," but his work may also become a "god" (or idol) in relation to him. In raising up idols, man is but perpetuating the sterile reign of nature, repeating a changeless pattern. Herein lies the significance of the pervasive insistence on the oriental nature-myths and mystery cults, the continual references to those divinities—Tammuz, Adonis and Osiris—who are mangled and slain only to rise again in the cycle of the seasons. For all their concern with fertility, these systems are sterile, because spiritless. Worship of this sort, in that debased form in which it is hardly superior to magic, we find towards the end of *Joseph in Egypt,* in the chapter entitled "The Bitch," in which Potiphar's wife, in a final and degenerate attempt to win Joseph to her will, permits her slave Tabubu to summon the obscene "Bitch-Goddess." It is noteworthy that this divinity is threatened and reviled by her communicant, and that the power she gives is conceived as taking effect on Joseph's body only—a "warm-blooded corpse." And although the interpretation is open that the charm actually takes effect, in that Joseph returns early to Potiphar's house on the afternoon of the New Year feast, it is Joseph's recollection of his father, and of the God of his fathers, who is "a God of the spirit," that is primarily responsible for his escape, however narrow and equivocal. For if God is Creator of man, there must be a plan, and to betray it would be in Joseph's eyes stupidity and sin. And because he almost betrays it, he merits his second descent into the pit. The pact between God and Abraham was a pact between God the Creator and a man who would be content to serve nothing but the highest. By virtue of the indwelling spirit in Abraham and his descendants, the intentions of God are united with those of

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man, and in accordance with the blessing and the promise an ultimate union or Incarnation is foreshadowed—the Shiloh of Jacob's musings. The concepts of God and man intersect at many points throughout the *Joseph* novels in the idea of the God-man: from the aboriginal myth of Adam *qadmon* recounted in the prologue to the exaltation of Joseph the Provider, feeding his brothers of his own substance. But the embodiments of the idea are in every case partial and equivocal, "types" as it were, pointing to a future fulfilment: the god-men of the mystery-cults are slaves of the natural order; Jacob, the father, is god-like in his dignity and in his wilful favoritism, but all-too-human in his weakness and self-indulgence; Joseph must outgrow an inclination to see himself as a youthful nature-god, whom others must love more than themselves, and is even at the last, in a sense, rejected. The courtier-eunuch Potiphar, masterfully portrayed by Mann, unites divine aspects with others that are less than human. Removed from life, existing only as a title, he is a false image of God, capable of rendering god-like justice but incapable of fruitful union with the world of man and nature. We must also note the presence in Egypt of two gods who have been "created" as more specific representations of the human will and the human reason: Amun, the nationalistic power-god of the local vested interests, and Aton, the tolerant and insipid divinity of the sun-disk. Dialectically opposed to the nature-cults (Osiris) and to one other, these gods are alike sterile and false. Although Joseph's sympathies are enlisted on the side of Aton in his conflict with his ram-browed adversary (for reason may at least point the way to truth), he will never concede to Pharaoh that the deity of On is ultimately one and the same with the God of his fathers. The Pharaoh Ikhnaton is to be seen as another embodiment of the God-man idea; he is son of the sun and a god to his people, but Joseph knows that although Pharaoh is on the "right way," he is not, for all his good intentions, the "right man for the way," in that he lacks the spirit and the blessing. It is to be in the future that the triangle, another representation of the tolerant Aton, will become the symbol of the Trinity.

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Spirit and Nature. The spirit dwells in the children of Abraham as the outcome of God's pact with their forefather, and at the same time, by virtue of the blessing transmitted from father to son, it is peculiarly present in one member of each generation. Joseph is at pains to explain this in one of his early conversations with Potiphar. There would seem to be an ambiguity here. It is hard to conceive of certain of Joseph's brothers—Simeon and Levi, for example—as "spiritual" men. Yet clearly even the most uncouth of them are heirs to the promise; whereas the young Pharaoh Ikhnaton, for all his culture and his good intentions, cannot escape from the natural order precisely because he lacks the blessing of the spirit. The formal curses pronounced by the dying Jacob on Reuben and the twins, making "official" what everyone had known all along, are curses imposed within the scope of the general blessing. As to the particular blessing, it is traditional that it be bestowed contrary to the order of nature in the preferment of the younger son to the elder. Isaac is not really deceived when Jacob cheats the hairy Esau; Jacob adheres to the pattern himself in preferring Ephraim to Manasses (although in this case his blessing has little significance), and it is only in his decisive blessing of Judah, and for reasons that I shall examine, that we would seem to find an exception. For according to the pattern Joseph, who is the younger and truly of the spirit, would be preferred; but his blessing is of someone "set apart," whereas *the* blessing, the promise for the future, is Judah's.

What we have in this twofold blessing, the general and the particular, is a prophetic symbol of a state of affairs yet to be realized: the impregnation by the spirit of the entire natural order. In the descendants of Abraham we find a provisional union of spirit with nature, while in the individual "bearers of the blessing" spirit assumes a more specific representation. Thus Joseph (for he is a man of the spirit even though not finally the recipient of the blessing) may be dialectically opposed as "spirit" to the "nature" of his brothers; but Joseph *and* his brothers are "spirit" as opposed to the "nature" of the unblessed world.

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How do the men of spirit fare in the world, or underworld, of nature? They are educated by it, or through it by God, to a fuller awareness of the spirit which they represent. The *Joseph* novels are for one thing an account of the education, in this sense, of Jacob and of Joseph. They also prosper materially in it —Joseph in Egypt, Jacob serving Laban—outsmarting the children of nature, which, in the interests of spirit, is right and proper. And to some extent they transfigure it, but not finally or completely, for although they are men of the spirit, they are not the spirit itself.

Father and Son. In the nature-cults, the son slays the father and assumes his role; son becomes father and is slain again, in the closed, self-repeating cycle of nature. Among the men of the spirit the pattern is that set by God and Abraham: the sacrifice of the son is demanded of the father, demanded but yet forbidden, for at the last moment Abraham's hand is stayed and the ram is found. The sacrifice is demanded of Abraham and Jacob as representatives of the spirit; in order to be worthy, the sacrifice must be of the spirit itself (for just as, in the son's eyes, the father represents God according to the pattern of the eternal, so to the father is the son the representation of God as the promise which is to be fulfilled). But in that the sacrificer is not God, the sacrifice is forbidden, and the blood of the beast (nature) is substituted for that of the son. Here we have another prophetic symbol of far-reaching implications. The spiritually meaningful "sacrifices" of Isaac and of Joseph are to be contrasted to the sinful behavior of Laban—who walls up his first-born in the foundations of his house—and of the incestuous Huia and Tuia—who sacrifice the virility of Potiphar their son in a spiritless effort to come to terms with nature.

To the son, the father represents God: Joseph, in the course of his education, as William Troy has observed, must outgrow his allegiance to inadequate father-representations (the Midianite, Mont-Kaw, Potiphar). In the last volume, Joseph has "found" his ultimate Father, and has rediscovered his natural one and been rediscovered by him ("The Lost is Found"). Thus the end of the

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sacrifice is reconciliation and the reaffirmation of the promise.

Life and Death. The God of Jacob and Joseph is a "living" God. "Never since he united with theirs His will to salvation had He anything to do with death and the nether world or with any madness rooted in the dark bottom of fruitfulness." But the false gods and the natural order itself are under the dominion of death. Jacob, serving Laban, and Joseph, entering Egypt, are descending into the underworld. Egypt, the home of the tomb-builders and the mummy-gods, is *par excellence* the land of death, and Joseph assumes a new name accordingly. The existence of the unblessed is a death-in-life, for which the great symbol is the Sphinx. Of indeterminate sex, "it had nothing to do with promise. . . . It endured drunkenly on into the future, but that future was wild and dead for that it was mere endurance and false eternity, bare of expectancy"—the false eternity of nature and death.

Sexuality partakes strongly of death, *is* of death unless it be to the fulfilment of the promise. That Isis, in the form of a vulture, should conceive of the dead Osiris is abhorrent to Joseph; but Tamar, playing the wayside whore with Judah, is justified by the future. In being tempted by Potiphar's wife, Joseph is drawn towards the kingdom of death, but as he says when the Sphinx appears to him in a dream, "How shall I commit such a deed and sin against God?" For when the men of the spirit find themselves in bondage to nature their existence is not a death-in-life, but a life-in-death.

Male and Female. God created man male and female, and the natural world partakes of the duality. Thus out of nature men may "create" divinities of a specified sex. But in the depths as well as in the heights the concept of the opposed sexes becomes confused and not altogether applicable: the *Joseph* novels are full of such purposeful ambiguities. At "the dark bottom of fruitfulness" the sexes are intermingled: Astarte wears a beard, and of what sex is the Sphinx? Potiphar's wife takes on a male aspect as wooer of Joseph. Indeed, the recital, in the last two sections of *Joseph in Egypt,* of her dark infatuation—which becomes, in

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the hands of this most dialectical of novelists, an unsurpassed account of passion—may be interpreted as the lust of death for life, of the depths for the heights, of nature for spirit. By contrast, that life which is not rooted in the depths, but glides as it were on the surface, existing in terms of titles and official functions, is sexless, inhuman, and according to Thomas Mann's conception of the courtiers of Heaven, "angelic." The eunuch Potiphar is such a "courtier of the sun," a "captain of troops" in name only. He has affinities with those angels who appear on the scene from time to time and with the enlightened and impotent sun-god Aton, of whose party he is. Not in himself markedly intellectual, he yet represents the false heights which may be attained by the mind and by all those aspects of life which profess to have nothing to do with the depths. Such isolation is God's prerogative; the mind is of nature. We are justified in seeing Potiphar himself, as well as his wife, prefigured in the composite symbol of the Sphinx, whose "false eternity" is that of the natural reason (Aton and Potiphar) as well as of the continuing forces of nature (Amun and Mut).

Ambiguity of sex is also suggested, more subtly, to characterize the relation of the men of the blessing to God and to nature. Joseph has his female aspect, as we find in our first meeting with him. He is compared to the moon, which is "female" in relation to the sun, "male" in relation to earth. The basis here is the opposition by which the spirit is conceived as "male," and nature, through which it works, as "female." But ultimately the spirit is beyond this distinction just as nature is beneath it.

The Chosen and the Rejected. Abraham was chosen by God, and he chose God. Ishmael and Esau are rejected, where Isaac and Jacob are chosen. The men of spirit must reject nature and choose the spirit (because they are chosen). But there are strong indications that those who are rejected are not finally so, and that, according to the plan, the entire natural order is, in fact, chosen by God and must eventually choose Him. For who is rejected by man may be the chosen of God, as from among the sons of Jacob—who represent, as we have seen, a provisional union of

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spirit with nature—the choice of God falls on the children of the rejected Leah (specifically Judah); Rachel, the "favorite wife," dies by the wayside in childbirth, and Joseph, her son, favored by Jacob above all his brethren, is both chosen and rejected at once—exalted, but "set apart."

I have discussed a few of the conceptual relationships that are clearly present in the dialectical grounding of the tetralogy. The list is not complete, nor has everything been said that could be said under the individual headings. But I have perhaps been able to give some indication of the complexity of the structure, and to indicate an approach towards a full understanding. What I have said about the Sphinx should be enough to show how erroneous it would be to assign a simple, univocal meaning to any of Mann's major symbols. More than one set of conceptual relationships is invariably involved, and the resultant meaning is complex, equivocal and liable to shifts in interpretation according to the point of view. So with the *ketonet*, Joseph's coat of many colors, which was also Rachel's bridal garment, worn on Jacob's wedding-night by the elder and unwanted sister. So too with the well and pit imagery, and with the persistent symbolism of sun and moon, day and night.

But my account would be seriously incomplete if I did not emphasize still another concept that is dominant in the work and that modifies the dialectic in all of its aspects. This is the notion of mediation, of atonement and reconciliation, and we have its outstanding representative in Joseph himself, who has affinities with the depths as well as with the heights. We have seen how the apparently opposed terms in my list tend to merge and be reconciled: God with man, spirit with nature. In the last volume the spirit of reconciliation is triumphant, so that the characters are aware of themselves as acting parts in a "sacred play." This accounts for the shift in tone which makes *Joseph the Provider*, in contrast to the "epic" first volumes and to the strongly tragic second half of *Joseph in Egypt*, a comedy in the purest sense. In this last novel, and particularly in the figure of Joseph, we

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find another of Mann's prophetic symbols, prefiguring an ultimate state of reconciliation. Here we may return to the matter of the blessing of Joseph and of Judah. Joseph is of the spirit. And he is a "bearer of the blessing" as well, but only in the context of the present; that is, in the achieved present that symbolizes the ultimate reconciliation. (Here is a parable of the artistic achievement.) Joseph is exalted in the present; he is the provider and the nourisher of his brethren. But it is of the essence of the blessing that it points to the future (for the reconciliation of *Joseph the Provider* is *no more* than a prophetic symbol); thus it must pass to Judah, the man of conscience. Joseph receives a peculiar blessing, the "blessing of the heights and of the depths," in recognition of his function as symbol and prefiguration. But the time is not ripe; each generation must in turn be reconciled. Thus is Joseph, in his exaltation, "set apart."

Novels organized according to such methods as these are clearly not of the established tradition of American fiction. Our novelists have tended to shy from ideas; James would be at the opposite pole to Thomas Mann in this respect. Perhaps, of our major writers, Melville came closest to writing dialectical novels, but it was not very close. Mann's expansiveness, his lack of economy and tendency to digression would seem uncongenial to many in this country. Yet they are inescapably a part of his method, and one has only to understand this method to see that Mann's digressions are held within the dialectical frame and never as "off the point" as (to take a well-known example) Tolstoy's in *War and Peace*. But any display of learning is likely to be looked at askance by our novelists, who are inclined to objectify their material in terms of situation and character, rather than in terms of thought and idea. Our men of letters are poets and critics. Faulkner and Hemingway, to name the two leading novelists of the older generation, do not even wish to be considered "literary men." In so far as this reluctance is due to bias and not to modesty, it seems unnecessarily provincial.

That the American novel has achieved a remarkable success

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within its particular modes and conventions is undeniable. But there are signs that the form is in need of being repossessed. Many of our younger novelists, even the most talented, write from a painfully restricted sensibility; there are too many little Faulkners and little Hemingways. The last traces of the "traditional society" are disappearing in our time, and the writer can depend less and less upon traditional norms to give order to his experience. In an urbanized and standardized culture, one's grasp of one's experience tends increasingly to be through the medium of ideas; if this be so, the dialectical novel must assume greater importance as a literary form, and the example of Thomas Mann prove of lasting benefit to American writing.

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Music Criticism in America

JOSEPH KERMAN

A MUSIC CRITIC IN THIS COUNTRY has to contend with a tacit tradition of apathy towards any intellectual consideration of the art. Our musicians have long countenanced this attitude, educators encourage it, and aestheticians have even occasionally made it into a philosophical principle. At any rate we have no common fund of music criticism here against which the critic can draw with confidence, for after *Modern Music* went into bankruptcy in 1946 the market was left to newspaper reviewing, which is notoriously speculative, and to a number of private sharks catering to the innocent and the desperate. Literary critics can tell with fair certainty what poetry and fiction their readers have absorbed, what magazines they read, what critical positions they will recognize; at very least a vocabulary is established, the relevant issues are drawn, and one can reasonably measure oneself against a sliding scale such as Mr. Hyman's in *The Armed Vision*. Nowhere does a similar *entente* obtain for music criticism. The subject is in an altogether fragmentary state, and the critics that have to be taken into account for a serious discussion are very, very few indeed.

Modern Music was the only American magazine, big or small, devoted to music from a specifically critical point of view. Its sole *raison d'être* was the war for the acceptance of contemporary music, a war that it fought for twenty years with the kind of ruthlessness that can lead to victory. Under the circumstances its passing was regarded as something of a tragedy, for with it went the only music-critical forum and a number of writers who could generally be counted upon for something valuable. But the fact is, and Virgil Thomson has gently said so, that by 1946 *Modern Music* was an anachronism, for the war was already won, and its criticism as such had always been too fragmentary—even too dilettantish—for peace-time standards. By policy it accepted reinforcements from anyone who had any kind of name in modern music, or was willing to help, and consequently always published a long list of short articles and reports and reviews; and though this may have made admirable field strategy, it encouraged neither critical responsibility nor coherence. By policy, too, *Modern Music* studiously ignored everything in music before Schönberg, establishing a sort of cosy obsession with modernity that is vestigial in Mr. Thomson's present writing. Now the only critical magazines left are *Music and Letters* and *Music Review* from England. Our own *Musical Quarterly* is devoted

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to the promotion of musical scholarship, in Mr. Lang's wide definition, with a singlemindedness reminiscent of *Modern Music* itself.

Daily concert reviewing is of course well enough established, and though its limitations are obvious, it has traditionally been a springboard to more serious and considered criticism. Mr. Virgil Thomson of *The New York Herald Tribune* combines a specifically musical sensitivity with sophistication, awareness and sympathy for the contemporary world, and even his most routine notices contain more relevant insight than most reviewers accumulate in a year's clippings. He is the one newspaper writer who seems at all concerned with the general unintellectuality of music today, and he has attempted some sort of overall survey of the musical scene. In non-musical matters Mr. Thomson is less discriminating, and in music too, an old wound incurred in his *Modern Music* days makes it difficult for him to develop an idea thoroughly instead of flitting at high speed from one point to another; but each point sets the reader thinking, for the critical imagination is as original and keen as it is mercurial. Most dangerous is Mr. Thomson's peculiar point of view, which seems to me to be frankly hedonistic rather than aesthetic: he is more interested in a good show than good music, and "hokum properly performed" rates an alarmingly high place on his scale of values. It is his own fault that many readers dismiss him completely, and unfairly, on account of their just impatience with this particular kind of irresponsibility, and with the resulting flippancy that he makes no effort to control. It would certainly be healthier if a normal system of checks and balances could be established with another good critic writing simultaneously—less personal, less svelte, and less hepped on French music.

For the rest it is not surprising to find the New York critics as a group no better and no worse than journalists in general, or, let us say, than the New York movie reviewers in particular. Mr. Thomson has had published two collections of reviews and brief critical essays of a somewhat less ephemeral character. I do not doubt that there are a number of other serious newspaper critics around the country, though I doubt that there are many; but until they can contrive to publish nationally they can hardly exert critical pressure beyond the subscription radius of the local journal. The record reviewers whom a number of magazines now offer as a fashionable excuse for music critics are of no more importance, for if they have anything at all valuable to say it is almost always about acoustical fidelity, baffles, pick-ups, and frequency response.

One would expect the readers of the intellectual magazines to be potentially a most receptive audience for intelligent music criticism, but actually they get to see very little of it. This perhaps explains why so many of them are impressed with Mr. B. H. Haggin of *The Nation*, who can hardly provide them with more than prestige tastes. There is a certain stubborn anti-intellectuality about Mr. Haggin, and though he has much that is refreshing and irreverent to say

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about the ballet, electronic engineering, and especially musical performance, he is simply not to be taken seriously as a genuine critic of music. Always ready with a black-and-white judgment about a composer or a particular work, he is singularly reluctant to discuss music in any more detail, unless by quotation; and a single original illumination is of more use to the reader than a whole catalogue of the generally accepted tastes among modern musicians. I find the attitude distressing, too, that ignores and at the same time patronizes the middle ages, the renaissance, the seventeenth-century baroque, and most contemporary music (though Mr. Haggin has "recently come to enjoy" some Stravinsky). Within these limits of time and scope there is really not much to disagree with in such a criticism, and still less to be gained from reading it; like a first year primer, it is mainly correct, but elementary. One can hardly complain of Mr. Haggin's violent and never-ending campaign against popular musical culture; it all needs to be said, and said often; he is one of the few people who say it, and it was most appropriate of Mr. Thomson to have afforded him a more effective platform. He even has a point that some, at least, of the semi-popular histories put out by "German musicologists" can be very stupid, though he more than obscures it by his own ignorance and vitriol and roaring bias. But after the first smell of blood one begins to wish not so much for a cessation of hostilities as for a show of constructive criticism from the iconoclast himself. Mr. Haggin evidently does not think it his place to reveal any kind of perception or insight into the music that he is considering.

The literary quarterlies hardly ever touch music; an exception is *Partisan Review*, recently, and it is a real question whether jazz criticism and Mr. Kurt List are better than nothing at all. Its criticism is partisan enough, the work of professional polemicists who disguise wilful misunderstanding of musical realities with current critical and intellectual jargon. Mr. List's own incompetence and prejudice seem to result less from evident difficulty with the language than from a messiness of thought that is almost a caricature of the worst German tradition. To the recent "Atonal Trail" controversy he contributed an altogether preposterous analysis of "The State of American Music" that measures every problem and every individual composer in terms of atonality, and that only manages to mention Stravinsky in an accidental aside—to say nothing of Hindemith, whose very name is kept from *Partisan Review* as if by editorial dictate. The traditional attack on Stravinsky is left to M. René Leibowitz, who is even more scatter-brained ("Do Schönberg and Stravinsky feel at home in Hollywood? Are there deeper reasons for their presence?"). Mr. Nicolas Nabokov, on the other side of the coin, can show perfectly clearly how List and Leibowitz substitute outrageously distorted musicology for aesthetic criteria, how they adjust everything to a preconceived atonal metaphysic, and how the whole business is just a rehash of stale polemic of the twenties. But of course

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his own promotion of Stravinsky, glib with high-minded generalities, reticent on actual aesthetic qualities of actual music, illustrates quite charmingly the faults he so correctly attacks in his adversaries. It remained for Miss Dika Newlin, author of that astonishing dissertation, *Bruckner, Mahler and Schönberg*, to complain in a long letter to the editors that Mr. Nabokov "negates the impression of strong, healthy, forward-looking musical activity produced in these pages"—looking forward to the frustrated polemic of post-war Vienna and, before that, to Wagner's *Kunstwerk der Zukunft*. I would have expected Mr. Haggin to have something to say about all this.

This critical irresponsibility is a function of the more serious paucity, which in turn is an index of an even more dangerous unintellectuality that distinguishes music in general in this country. No doubt other of the major arts are as highly commercialized, but none are so servile as to neglect intellectual criticism and responsible scholarship almost completely. The general acceptance of middle- and low-brow standards by musicians is deadly for the growing generation of performers, who to a man see no further than their excellently schooled finger-tips. It is even worse for composers, in a time when artistic creation is increasingly identified with values apart from those of popular culture. The low concept of education in the conservatories and universities which form these musicians is another index of this unintellectuality, and the temptation to blame them for it directly is certainly very strong. The situation will not mend until they can be shamed into teaching music *as an art*.

What is needed outside the schools, and with their help, is a company of critics writing to and for themselves, to musicians and composers (who will have to listen to them), and for a public which may be assumed to have an interest in music and to be prepared to follow it up. Musicians and public alike have much to gain from a careful, articulate analysis of modern music in relation to modern thought, and from a new and equally careful examination of the whole tradition from a contemporary American point of view. We may perhaps think that the first of these aims is the more vital, but that the second, which logically precedes it, has a life of its own and will in the long run prove the greater task. With respect to this tradition our attitude should avoid both a noisy independence of all things European and a subservience that can tolerate a Max Graf or a Kurt List; at all events we can at the moment only postulate the kind of public which the European artist and critic addressed. All our arts and letters, after all, have been formed in the space of a very few years, and it is not surprising that here there is no established audience for such a music criticism, and never has been. There never will be as long as the postulated audience and the postulated criticism wait politely for one another to come into existence.

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Notes on the Films

GEORGE BARBAROW

1. THE REIGNING MONARCH OF THE SMALL CINEMA CIRCUIT

OF ALL THE SERIOUS POSTWAR MOVIE DIRECTORS, Roberto Rossellini is the most popular. This may be gratifying or not, depending upon how well one likes *Open City* and *Paisan;* the important thing to remember is that popularity is not a valid criterion, especially in judging movies, because popularity has no necessary connection with merit. When his work is viewed calmly, it is clear that Rossellini is a mediocre moviemaker, exhibiting simultaneously a meagre creative imagination and a singular brutality in his mishandling of the movie medium.

The range of Rossellini's raw material is almost limitless (it is The Battle of Italy), yet what he does with it is similar to what many French writers, notably Maupassant, did with the great mass of incidents associated with the War of 1870. I suggest that, as in Maupassant, Rossellini's aggregate is diminished by concentration upon small events, and by the confinement of attention within the limits of the event itself, which is thus isolated and made to seem essentially petty. Maupassant chopped up the Franco-Prussian War into little wriggling bits; Rossellini does the same with his Battle, with this difference: most of the bits don't wriggle.

Rossellini's unit is the short episode, the "slice of life" under tension of external crisis, the one-act play, the vignette, the anecdote, the parable. If he has any larger conceptions, they don't emerge. It is wishful thinking to call his two pictures "whole" films; his sections, which are little stories of the War, are complete in themselves, and the ten or so that go to make up *Open City* and *Paisan* are linked or forced together with remarkable superficiality; to add one more would do nothing more than make his anthology ten or twenty minutes longer, and to subtract one would merely shorten the film without making it tighter. The greatest structural weakness of *Open City* is the arbitrary limitation to three days in one place; here the director has not the imagination to build up a visual exposition of the background of dynamic characters, but tries to stay at climax for almost two hours. The overall form of *Paisan* is as chronological as a direct pedestrian walk from one point to another; the episodes are fixed in time and space by animated maps and a commentator's voice, devices so transparently inconsistent with the naturalistic style of the episodes themselves that they virtually command the

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spectator not to look for any relationships between the events. As if realizing that some formal linkage is necessary in order to exhibit his episodes as a feature-length movie under one title, Rossellini apparently selected the method that cost the least number of dollars, disregarding the obvious danger of inspiring various manifestations of boredom in the audience.

The typical Rossellini episode discovers a paisan (a native, a "countryman," an ordinary citizen, or an American who is a paisan simply by virtue of being a person temporarily settled in Italy), and follows one or more of these people through a crucial situation, ending with death or with some brief moment of human insight. This kind of story is perfectly legitimate, yet deceptively simple because it places an extraordinary premium on the style and manner of telling. Every second of it must be charged and accented, taut, and arranged for effect. In it, the flash of insight or moment of pity depends for its revelation upon subtle discriminations and precise timing. We expect, as soon as we become aware of the type of story we are watching (vignette, or miniature), something on the order of a tale of Chekhov; also we will not be satisfied with anything less than absolute mastery of the artist's medium, be it in writing by a Russian or moviemaking by an Italian. We demand, if we are to be moved, two things: the presentation of definitive, revelatory details in suspenseful order, and the ruthless exclusion of superfluities. The vignette gets its power by compression; when the material is manipulated toward a climax, the spark that releases our emotion is often so feeble as to seem positively petty if taken out of context, for here everything depends upon the manner of discovery that a character is crying, or the way a gentleman slashes at a bed of flowers, his hat flying off and blown away in the wind, or whether a door is slammed, left open, or gently closed. We accept slightness of material when its fragility invites intimacy; by the same token our sensibilities are lacerated when the treatment is banal, as in Rossellini's films.

It should be noted that Rossellini's style is no style. It is a rough-and-ready sort of naturalism, distinguished by a carelessness which rapidly dissipates the advantages of realism. He, in common with other postwar Italians, likes to shoot on location as much as possible; it is reported that he also improvises a great deal (which is fine, if you know how to do it), but his improvisations, as we shall see, are terrible. At all times his work reveals an addiction to the worst vice of contemporary moviemakers: his camera wanders and flops around like a drugged idiot; in company with his Hollywood brothers, he is constantly booming and zooming, trucking and panning and tilting. On occasion he reveals that he knows he should pan *from* something interesting *to* something interesting, but he hasn't yet learned that there ought to be something interesting in between, and most of the time the movement is empty of meaning; usually the sole function of the panning movement is to

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keep an actor in the middle of the frame as he walks from one side of the room to the other. There are moments when this intolerable blundering reaches a climax of its own; it is when we realize that the actor is directed to move across the room for no reason at all. This is the mark of a nervous and frustrated man; it would be ludicrous if there were not some pathos in the realization that Rossellini is one of the very few moviemakers in the whole world who is in a position to exploit valid modern material. He works to put on film a particular and significant aspect of the world chaos: rampant inhumanity, large chunks of it, in conflict with individual human beings. The struggle for communication between people has hardly ever been so desperate before; if Vigo were alive to-day, and making films, we would be able to calculate, by comparison, how poorly Rossellini uses the tools of his medium. Rossellini is a moviemaker who doesn't understand, among other things, the relationship and the attainable contrast between a fixed and a moving camera. Vigo convinces us that his shot-viewpoint is the best one, indeed the only one; then when Vigo moves the camera, it is for sufficient reason, and his scenes gain expressive power where Rosselini's fall apart. It is clearly the difference between a genuine artist and a hack; if tempo control, or any kind of definitive control, is unimportant to the director, it will be unimportant to the audience.

The delicate form of the vignette, whose aim might be, for instance, to reveal a world of emotion in a chance relationship, requires neat and concise distinctions of gesture and camera viewpoint, clear delineation of such trifles as the amount of focus in the background, and, above all, depends for its effect upon expert cutting to maintain tempo and suspense until the exact point is made; Huston shows this kind of skill at several places in *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, especially where Dobbs drinks from the muddy puddle and is surprised by the bandit. It is unfortunate that Rossellini fails to realize that he is constantly destroying tempo by not attempting to control it; he seems not to know that the spectator's eye consciously or unconsciously scans the whole frame, and will tend to wander off into the background when the important action or detail is in the foreground; the director has to direct not only the actors but also the spectator's eye.

Paying no heed to the spectator's eye, Rossellini includes within his frame enough extraneous detail to make a dozen films, and this is the worst abuse that results from careless naturalism. He is apparently unwilling or unable to select and arrange what is recorded by the camera. One example ought to suffice among the many to be found in *Open City* and *Paisan;* it is an example of bad workmanship that is common enough in movies, but which is practically a Rossellini trademark by now: if it could be dignified by a name, the name would be Unpremeditated Distraction.

The particular example is in the Naples Episode in *Paisan,* where a street

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urchin follows a drunken Negro M.P. with the clear aim of stealing something from the soldier. The American staggers to a pile of rubble, and, only dimly aware that he has company, starts to spout incoherent tavern philosophy in American. The gamin replies in Italian (which calls for subtitles), they get to the verge of intimate friendship by the bond of music (harmonica), and then the inevitable, terrible isolation intrudes when the drunk starts to pass out. Unconsciousness will break the friendship, and this the boy realizes (thievery is his occupation, he can't help himself), so he screams at the Negro: "Don't go to sleep! I'll steal your boots!" It is a potent idea.

Most of the scene is shot from a very low viewpoint. The soldier sits and sprawls in the left of the frame, the gamin scrambles around on the heap of bricks at center and right; in back of them is a broken wall; in back of the wall is a magnificent church tower, dramatically placed, so that it becomes visually the most important feature of the shot.

The scene is about as incoherent and distracting as any to be found in movies to-day. The spectator's eye is constantly hopping back and forth between the title and the steeple, with occasional side glances at the soldier and the infernally restless boy, meanwhile attempting a hasty study of the jagged bricks, yet the whole point of the scene is to reveal a very delicate emotional crisis between two people. We have only to imagine how Chaplin (within whose province this kind of material lies) would present the scene to be aware of the sloppiness and bungling workmanship here; one might suppose that, as an example of how to ruin a good idea, it could be surpassed only by Rossellini himself, always assuming that there are a few Hollywooders who might do worse if given the chance.

It may have been pure chance in this case that led to the substitution of dynamic visual elements for the indicated quiet shots; it is likely that the director and his cameraman happened to spot the location and decided without any reflection at all that the church tower rising above the ruins would make an "interesting shot." It is.

Rossellini's weakness of imagination and his insensitivity in execution are his main characteristics. Either one of them could be forgiven, as we forgive Clair for triviality and Stroheim for monstrous crudity, but not both. The combination of defects is fatal.

2. THE POET VS. THE STATE

To think he could learn anything significant about the U.S.S.R. by looking at the pitifully small group of Soviet films that have been shown in America during the past fifteen years, a man would have to be a fool, as much of a fool as one who regularly "discovers" America with the aid of

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Bob Hope, Mark Hellinger, John Ford, and Frank Capra. About Russian films, as about most Hollywood products, there is a pervading nullity that is as noncommittal as a loaf of commercial bread; it is important, perhaps, that the bread tastes like cooked paper, but to infer much from the bread alone is impossible—somehow the character has been squeezed out of the product; it would be a mistake even to guess whether this was done by accident or design, or whether anything was there to be squeezed out in the first place. Maybe the flour was made of wood-pulp and not wheat; how do you *know?*

We can imagine that this result would have come about even if there had been no famous "Lenin's realization" that the cinema could be used for propaganda; this is the only function that Soviet films ever had. The moviemakers occupied themselves with technical discoveries for a dozen years or so and wound up pretty thoroughly out of touch with the masses; at last the Commissars pressed a few buttons and restored a kind of mechanical simplicity that revealed the ideology in all its mediocre horror. At its best the sparkling brilliance of the Soviet cinema made it relatively easy for us to overlook its inhumanity; one could learn more about the nature of the medium here than anywhere else, and had only to believe in the ideology to be convinced that this was genuine art. At its ebb, which is just about now, let us not blame Stalin, for it was "scientific dialectical materialism" that killed the art at birth, and the notion that esthetic matters can be settled in committee (in Hollywood called "story conference") finished off any lingering hopes.

There is a certain sturdy resistance to this corrosion in the work of Dovzhenko, who, of all the Soviet moviemakers, can most fairly be called a genius. He appears to be so stuffed with "human knowledge" that it leaks out of him and becomes part of his films; it is ironic that his individual feeling is so strong and pervasive that the scientific Marxist adepts are completely baffled by it. They can't classify it, or define it, so they call it "poetry," a characteristic reaction of the literal-abstractionist mind when it is confronted by a work of art. At the end of *Arsenal,* Dovzhenko (who is reported to be a devout believer of the ideology), gets a magnificent unconscious criticism of the propaganda on the screen: the hero's Spirit is Life Itself and it makes him invulnerable to the Enemy's close-range bullets, which bounce off his bared chest (or go right through his body without damage; it doesn't matter).

After 1930, Eisenstein went to Mexico, then to professorship, and finally into an eclectic intellectual swamp, from the depths of which he made a couple of dreadful "epics," meanwhile pouring out a series of weird essays on Art; at last he escaped the latest cultural purge by dying; as *Time* magazine hints, it was the only way out. Pudovkin was last seen as an actor in *Ivan The Terrible, Part One.* Dovzhenko is now working on a new film; when and

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if it is shown in America, we shall be able to see if the Committee can suppress genius entirely by forcing the elimination of the last intangible: "poetry."

3. LIVING PICTURES

FARREBIQUE, which could be subtitled "The Home Life of the Kulaks," is a near-perfect movie. It is a documentary film in the original sense of "giving evidence." Its makers, Georges Rouquier and a crew of amazingly patient photographers, have consciously attempted to remain outside of obvious attitudes of pity, censure, or praise. In the process, as a product of his objective viewpoint, Rouquier makes the whole Grierson school of "documentalists" look like the anemic, stilted, pamphleteering propagandists that they are.

Rouquier's film is an enormously detailed presentation of the daily routines of a prosperous French farm family and their plants and animals during a period of one year; a picture of a family so closely connected with the place-name "Farrebique" that the World War I memorial in the village includes the name Albert *de Farrebique;* a representation of farmers whose every thought and action is dependent upon the continuity of the farm. To these people, "Farrebique" is an indissoluble corporation, and their only real personal conflicts-of-opinion have to do with whether or not to install electricity and whether or not to rebuild the house this year.

With these burning questions constantly at issue, now in the foreground, now underlying, we are shown such a multitude of employments that to name two dozen would be to slight two hundred dozen others. Not only do we see what is done, and to what purpose; we see also the way of doing it, the tempo and trick-of-it as the final expression of lifetimes of work. This is the screen realization of the descriptive aim in James Agee's book, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men;* the difference is that *Farrebique* is a movie, and what is done in 90 minutes is the showing of "Farrebique" on the screen in such a way that virtually every square inch of every shot is visual evidence. The picture is saturated with smells, textures, temperatures, humidities; when a filter is attached in front of the lens it is not to catch a moment of abstract, pictorial, salon-still "beauty" as in *The National Geographic;* it is to make visible a cloud as evidence of a special kind of weather condition recognizably in the memory and sense-perceptions of the spectator. This is a true movie; the connection is made by sight.

The camera that wanders over this farm in all seasons, weathers, and times-of-day gradually discovers something that is implicit in the scene: the people here are animals, higher animals, controlling animals. There is no missing link; we cannot tell at what point the animal leaves off and the human beings. It is clear that Marx and Engels made at least one grotesque error; what they called "the idiocy of rural life" is more nearly the *animality*

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of rural life, and *Farrebique* is the proof—the fox, the earthworm, the goose, and the horse are all full members of the corporation; they simply don't happen to be on the board of directors. The main feature of this life is physical labor—there is hardly any time for abstract thought or frivolous amusements—the work is primitive and dull work, done by hand, to the verge of exhaustion. It can never be forgotten that the farmer has taken on his back the crushing burden of organizing and maintaining a sizable slice of the countryside in a way that seems fitting to him as it seemed fitting to his grandfather, and he doesn't give up until he literally can't move a muscle, and is presently dead, like an old stag in the forest.

In view of the remarkable completeness of this cinematic triumph, it is surprising that the legendary peasant-landowner's hoard and how he gets and keeps it is not spied out by the argus-eyed camera, for then we could get a clarification of M. Farrebique's position in the world. We could probably trust the capable Rouquier to do this accurately, for he appears to have no protruding "ideology"—Marxist, Fascist, Sentimental, or Academic—he merely has what is most needed: an engrossing interest in his subject, and the skill to make us interested. Unfortunately, in *Farrebique* no surplus produce is taken to market; no gold is brought back. It is unfortunate because the gold is important: it "costs" in money to rebuild the house, to put in the electricity, and to buy off the younger brothers and the sisters when the farm is shared; it has cost plenty of gold in the past, we imagine, to expand the farm by a process of buying other people's fields over a period of more than a century.

This market-money omission is the only significant fault in a film that is a visual feast utilizing every fundamental cinematic resource to achieve its aim, and here the movie devices are rightly used—they are subordinate to the material, and are never included for the sake of virtuosity or prettiness. The overall form is determined by the annual cycle, and the rhythm is the unaccented rhythm of the seasons; to this cycle and rhythm the farmer, and very properly the moviemaker, subordinate themselves. Philosophic and religious questions are referred to God by way of the priest, and are answered in the ancient, chanted, quantitative rhythm of the Mass on Sunday.

4. HOW TO LOOK AT A MOVIE

THE ART OF THE FILM, by *Ernest Lindgren*. Macmillan. $4.50.

ALTHOUGH THERE IS NOTHING NEW or of major importance to film students to be found in it (the author leans heavily on secondary sources for his history and explanations about film "grammar"), this book implies an esthetically dangerous thesis: that the film industry as now constituted is capable of producing works of art on a "Shakespearean" level. This is dangerous not on a wide scale, but to the success of the book; any reader who is familiar with

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the typical and even the exceptional American or British product already knows that the idea has been refuted by the product itself.

Lindgren is careful to say "medium" instead of "industry," but for him the medium is the industry; an independent or individualistic moviemaker can't even exist for lack of money, for lack of prestige, because the medium is too complicated for one man to control, etc. Nevertheless, virtually all his claims for the artistic validity of the medium are supported by reference to Griffith, Pudovkin, and Eisenstein, who, at the height of their powers, were in complete charge of their productions, and supervised the meanest details.

The remainder of Lindgren's "esthetic" is confined to the expression of his preference for naturalistic uses of sight and sound. At one point (p. 110) he states as a fact, ". . . the film medium is a naturalistic medium, not a conventionalized one; it is direct, not indirect; it represents not by description, but by the *reproduction* of actual sights and sounds." (Italics mine). He has not bothered to account for Arnheim's fundamental observation: photography's only chance for art is to be found in the realization that the camera is a liar, that the camera *fails* to reproduce an "actual" sight, and that the resulting picture is at best only a feeble imitation if imitation is the photographer's aim.

The author's enthusiasm, his eager attempt to convince the reader of cinematic possibilities, leads to poor writing and argument. It is a mistake, for instance, to use such a great number of literary comparisons and analogies. Perhaps this method is employed in the hope that the reader, being already respectfully familiar with printed words, will be able to recognize similarities between writing and movie-making, and thus understand the point. The method ignores the multitude of differences between a prose story and a movie, the fortuitous nature of the similarities, and the reader's preconceptions about both. Lindgren has not heeded the failure of Eisenstein, whose bewildering citations from all the arts made *The Film Sense* almost incomprehensible.

The Art of the Film, limited as it is to a celebration of naturalistic movie-making, and vainly calling for artistic improvement in the current product, is of slight interest, except for the strange boldness of the proposition that the assemblyline methods of collective workmanship can rival the achievements of a Beethoven or a Shakespeare. Charlie Chaplin, whose whole career is a brilliant repudiation of both naturalism and collectivism, who has had some success as an artist, and about whom the author says very little, answers the critic with a reproachful stare. Under the still from *The Gold Rush* (p. 162-C), Chaplin is called "The greatest actor of the silent film." Lindgren, regarding individualism as "impractical" or even "impossible" amid the present complexity of the modern film studio, and habitually thinking in terms of division-of-talent, is unable to conceive of a movie-worker as more than one thing at a time. He unconsciously reduces Chaplin's stature, as others have done, by neglecting to add that the comedian could become "the greatest actor" only by being a great scenarist and director also.

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REVIEWS

Meager Harvest

W. B. C. WATKINS

THE DOUBLE AXE AND OTHER POEMS, by *Robinson Jeffers*. Random House. $2.50.
ACTFIVE AND OTHER POEMS, by *Archibald MacLeish*. Random House. $2.50.
STRANGER AT CONEY ISLAND AND OTHER POEMS, by *Kenneth Fearing*. Harcourt, Brace. $2.00.
POEMS 1940-1947, by *Theodore Spencer*. Harvard. $2.75.
A BEGINNING, by *Robert Horan*. Foreword by *W. H. Auden*. Yale. $2.50.
SELECTED POEMS, by *Vernon Watkins*. New Directions. $3.00.

THIS RELUCTANT REVIEWER IS DISMAYED to find so little good to say about these six new volumes of poetry. With two exceptions, they show to greater or less degree a failure of language and a failure of imagination. The temptation in several instances is to kill with kindness, for here is undeniable sensitivity, and skill in manipulating words, in modulating sound. But too much in these volumes is vocabulary rather than concrete image or symbol, too much that is not downright bad is poeticism rather than poetry. Not all of course is chaff, and a few of the failures are fine failures.

Perhaps one trouble is a desperate striving for something important to say; another may be a sense of insufficiency compared with poets of the past, even of the immediate past. If our writers would only stop trying to be Aeschylus, Donne, Whitman, Yeats, Eliot and just be unpretentiously themselves it might help. Mr. MacLeish is conspicuously the poet in search of his subject; something portentous to say in key with what we think of as "the times." Mr. Jeffers has chased his subject for so long that he and it are worn to a frazzle. An exception is Mr. Fearing, who easily attunes his tedium with life to the readers of the literate magazines. Even Mr. Spencer in his wry, off-hand way too often wants to be profound and is too much under the sway of the later, plainer Yeats. Of the two most interesting poets here, Mr. Vernon Watkins is least successful in topical poems like 'The Shooting of Werfel'; but he and Mr. Horan arrest attention precisely because they write about what they see and know, because they avoid worn counters and work with images, not objects.

Whether or not one is moved to willing suspension of disbelief by Mr. Jeffers' attempt, in the spirit of their own tragedy, to reverse the Greeks, stripping

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man of all humanity and granting it instead to nature, his earlier poems ('Tamar,' 'Roan Stallion') had emotional and imaginative impact. Freudian horrors were effectively heaped on horror's head and his revulsion from human nature was savagely projected, though like O'Neill, with whom he has much in common, his achievement has always been more potential than actual (Matthew Arnold would say that they do not know enough). *The Double Axe and Other Poems* is the mixture as before, sadly diluted. In the title poem the cataclysm of incestuous, Fury-driven marionettes is as meaningful and convincing as a desiccated virgin's screaming the prevalence of rape. Rape, lust, murder, all imaginable violence remain mere words, leaving us cold as the stone Mr. Jeffers so much admires. The conception of the son's return from the dead (Hamlet-Lazarus) to pull his household down around his rotting ears is good Jeffers; the execution, save for a few passages in the second part, fails. Rarely, the old power flashes in a palomino streaking down a ravine or a hawk in flight or an Indian girl violated by the river, or in a short poem like the 'Inquisitors.'

'ActFive,' Mr. MacLeish's title poem, though metrically adroit, is equally disastrous, collapsing ponderously around no center. He has a fatal gift for Elizabethan tragic mummeries in pleasant rhythms with a dying fall, as mesmerizing as Swinburne's, and always with attenuated Eliot overtones. But his best earlier work had some bones to its thought, some sinew to its rhythms, some story to give it guts. He is a lyric and narrative, not a dramatic poet. Undoubtedly he has an elegiac tone peculiarly his, a kind of disembodied Tennysonian nostalgia, and many will find pleasure in such well-wrought lines as these, the first echoing one far greater:

Quietness clings to the air
Quietness gathers the bell
To a great distance
Listen
This is the snow
This is the slow
Chime the
Snow makes
It encloses us
Time in the snow is alone
Time in the snow is at last
Is past.

The competent verse of Mr. Fearing's *Stranger at Coney Island and Other Poems* tells us that we live in a sick world in need of a doctor without photo-electric eyes, and of someone to answer our unformulated questions. While there is ironic intent in the triviality of the questions asked of Eternity, the

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poet by never formulating a single searching question simplifies his task and incidentally reduces his poems to the trifles they are concerned with. Juke-boxes, sports arenas, the couches of psychoanalysts, carnivals—these are the décor; one has only to recall Eliot's throbbing taxi or worn-out piano 'mechanical and tired' to realize that Mr. Fearing's modern paraphernalia are stage properties only, to be rearranged in half an hour for the next poem. Like Cecil Day Lewis, he seems fated to have his imagination and poetic ingenuity show to better effect in the detective story.

To me Mr. Spencer is a borderline case. That he has an original, though limited poetic gift is clear; clear also that he is consciously fashioning a personal style and music. On a modest level of course, he seems interested only in fit audience though few. Many of his sophisticated gnomic nursery rhymes, as I can best describe them, deliberately adopt the iteration and form not so much of the ballad as of child's verse. In contrast, the substance is usually a bit of metaphysical speculation. At times this odd combination is extremely effective, producing the indefinable spell of 'Why Weavers Object'; at others it is, when not plain silly, pointlessly repetitious. Mr. Spencer's more traditional poems, like 'The Phoenix', are less successful, and his long poem, 'The Alumni,' no doubt highly effective at the time, should have lapsed with the occasion. A handful of good poems suffer from the matrix of fugitive pieces which he insists on re-printing with them. 'A Reason for Writing,' is throttled by (this time the aureate) Yeats, but 'The Shell' illustrates Mr. Spencer's individual note:

The whirls of this dead shell
Echo the whorl of ear;
Circuitous and around
The sun describes the year;
Around the curving sun
The outer knife of air
Carves from the curve of time
Vastly the ultimate sphere;
And all broad turning heaven
Wheeling the stars in air
Comes whirling down to a shell
And this expectant ear.

In *A Beginning*, the most recent volume of the Yale Series of Younger Poets, Mr. Horan proves on every page the love of language which Mr. Auden in his Foreword requires of any poet; at times Mr. Horan is, like Keats, intoxicated with words. This is all to the good, for even his inferior lines are alive; he is, of this group, at the opposite pole from Mr. Jeffers. Images, often original and

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precise, pour out prodigally, overfreighting his more ambitious poems where the substance is too frail, yet almost always a delight in themselves, and producing in his simpler lyrics a fresh beauty. In time Mr. Horan will learn more concentration and selectivity and perhaps attain that 'private vision of the public world' which Mr. Auden already grants him. In this first volume his freedom from mannerism and intellectual pretension, his sensitive observation, his passion for language—these will do.

But the laureate of these six is Mr. Vernon Watkins, who has an equal, though quieter, love of language and greater maturity. A fellow Welshman and friend of Dylan Thomas, he wisely refuses to coruscate after him. The two longest of *Selected Poems* seem to me fine failures (his elegy to a childhood memory of Pearl White is a delightful *tour de force*), yet at best his is a way of feeling and a use of language new to our day. The fragments from Yeats, the experiments, not altogether happy, in alliterative pattern are insignificant; what is important is his recapturing (in the sense that Spenser recaptures Chaucer) the music and verbal felicity of seventeenth-century prose as well as verse. I may be wide of the mark, but I seem to hear them, elaborate in 'Sea-Music for my Sister Travelling':

> *Tonight*
> *Between the narrow pointers which divide*
> *The close room and the far,*
> The fathomed world and your unfathomable meteorite,
> Erratic in the night, like a new star,
> Between blown, blasted Jericho, and houses shattered here,
> Between this grief's caught breath and the Great Year
> All moons and mysteries are. . . .

simple in 'Indolence':

> *Count up those books whose pages you have read*
> *Moulded by water. Wasps this paper made.*
> Come. You have taken tribute from the dead.
> Your tribute to the quick must now be paid.
> *What lovelier tribute than to rest your head*
> *Beneath this birchtree which is bound to fade?*
> *And watch the branches quivering by a thread*
> Beyond interpretation of the shade.

or in 'The Turning of the Leaves':

> *Not yet! Do not yet touch,*
> *Break not this branch of silver-birch,*
> *Nor ask the stealthy river why it laves*
> *Black roots that feed the leaves.*

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Ask first the flickering wren.
He will move further. Ask the rain.
No drop, though round, through that white miracle
Will sink, to be your oracle.

How different from Mr. MacLeish's 'Winter is another Country,' a charming poem in which words and images are blurred:

If the autumn would
End! If the sweet season,
The late light in the tall trees would
End! If the fragrance, the odor of
Fallen apples, dust on the road. . . .

In Mr. Watkins' poem the words are familiar but new-minted coins, each word and image precisely weighed, and worth its face value.

A Hope for Poetry?

DONALD A. STAUFFER

A LITTLE TREASURY OF AMERICAN POETRY, edited by *Oscar Williams*. Charles Scribner's Sons. $3.75.

AN ANTHOLOGY MAY PRESERVE LITERATURE, or interpret its own age to subsequent historians, or transmit and interpret literature to its own age. The first of these three functions is priceless: we owe a tremendous debt to some nameless ancient or ancients for the Greek Anthology, or to Tottle for his Miscellany. But today such preservation of good literature that would otherwise vanish is hardly a conceivable need. The second function is accidental and is of most interest to antiquarians of society and to historians of literature: reading an eighteenth-century *Beauties of Shakespeare* shows us more about the eighteenth century than about Shakespeare. Furthermore, an anthology may tell more about its collector than about the age he lives in, as the *Golden Treasury* may be even more Palgrave than it is Victorian.

The last of these functions—the interpretation of literature for the benefit of the living—is the most important and central act an anthologist performs. Though this has always been true, it is particularly notable today in our mass society. What are all of our high-school and college surveys of literature but

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giant anthologies designed to instruct the eager and the unwilling, the clever and the stupid, the inquiring and the puzzled, in what they "ought" to know? Whether the subject is World Masterpieces or Sea Chanteys, the instruction must be uniform and is bound to be powerful. A great part of the poetry that any of us knows by heart—and how little and poor that has become!—comes from the school readers. "Let me write the anthologies of a nation and I care not who makes its laws."

Compulsory education, plus the pressure of competing interests, plus the popular demand for easy shortcuts to culture, have made the modern anthologist influential. It is an ironical comment on our mass civilization that the anthologist, not the poet, can support himself through poetry. A money society necessarily rewards those whom it esteems with money, and a democratic mass society has made the anthologist the most immediate and effective of its types of literary critic. With varying emphases, from the book-club selectors and digestors to the esoteric preservers of our heritage and the pointers in new directions, the anthologists mediate between the creative artist and popular demand. It is a hard job. Perhaps an impossible one.

Oscar Williams has the qualifications for a good anthologist. The very traits that often make his own poetry derivative and passive permit him more catholic sympathies than most people possess. Moreover, he understands the readers of poetry as well as the poets, and is willing to work on the fine details that hold a book together.

His choices, naturally, cannot satisfy everyone. He makes almost a fetish of geography, so that "American Poetry" begins with the picture-writing of the Lenni Lenape and ends, almost, with Auden *after* he became an American citizen. Mr. Williams is severe on the nineteenth century, so that Longfellow gets fewer pages than Frankenberg, Lowell (James Russell) less than Coman Leavenworth, and Whittier less than a third as much as Eberhart. Was the nineteenth century as bad as all that? Or are our current standards of taste—*l'art pour l'art*, irrationality, allusion, compression, mystery, expressionism, suggestion—somewhat limited? His attack on Longfellow even avoids consistency. In a single paragraph, Longfellow is damned for "superficial research," yet accused of turning for his form and rhythms, "in true academic style," to the Finns rather than the Amerindians. Is not this academicism, so reprehensible in Longfellow, the praiseworthy eclecticism of Eliot, the cosmopolitanism of Auden? It is a grave charge to dismiss the New England School as "sentimental and largely meretricious" and to suggest that omitting them entirely might have been an even more courageous effort to raise the standard of taste and to educate the young "through serious poetry." Such an attitude intimates again, what the world is always too willing to believe, that truth and beauty have been discovered in our own day for the first time. Williams' introduction is less systematic and balanced than his selection of poems: one of its two longest

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sections regrets that our poetry owes so little to the Amerindians; while the other, even longer, explodes in the indignation of split infinitives over our current loose thinking regarding plagiarism.

On the positive side, the Introduction contains some important incidental observations: on America's excessive proportion of spottily educated originals—individual figures, working almost alone; on possible reasons for the sad rejection of poetry by the people; on the richness of twentieth-century poetry, particularly in technical experiments; and on the raising of standards of taste through expert modern criticism, not only by Eliot but by the New Metaphysicals who are themselves poets. Since the absolute greatness of American poetry is still a matter for debate, it is tactically pleasant to find Mr. Williams hopeful and positive: "The last fifty years have seen the publication of much more poetry of a much higher standard than all that was written in the preceding two hundred and fifty years." If American poets can wed tradition and originality—a large "if"—then "the appearance of our Shakespeare may not be far off." He envisions our political importance increasing the confidence of American poets, and in his last paragraph trumpets a prophecy that New York may become "the literary world capital," with smaller centers of literary awareness throughout the states, believing that the resultant nation-wide activity "inevitably will create major poets."

The presentation, always of first importance, is excellent. As with the other Little Treasury volumes, this book is a pleasure to read—gay, handy, gilt-topped, with a red marker-ribbon that every anthology of poems needs. It is divided into three sections, with a short opening on "American Indian Poetry" and a longer close on "Poetry of the Forties," these two side-panels framing the central section in the triptych: "The Chief Poets from Colonial Times to the Present Day." Here the order is chonological by date of birth. In 842 pages of poems, Mr. Williams manages to include really long poems by Whitman, Stevens, Eliot, Robinson, and Crane, where his choice is impeccable. The indexes are sensible and helpful. The appended "Portraits of the Poets" make the volume personal and satisfy natural curiosity. Only two portraits are given a whole page—Whitman and Eliot—and here again, few would quarrel with his choice.

A brave little book, then, about as well chosen and proportioned as is humanly possible, which allows the reader to settle down, if he has a free season or a succession of leisurely evenings, and ask himself the questions: What is American poetry? Where has it come from and where is it going? Who's who?

Obviously American poetry did not come from the Lenni Lenape, the Navajo, the Cherokee, the Paiute, or the Papago. They are further away than is *Beowulf*, say, from Shelley. Moreover, it developed with extraordinary slowness. The history of American letters shows incontrovertibly that a rich and accepted

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culture is needful to the full development of talent or even of genius. Across a sleeping continent, the pioneers might plow up an earth already rich. But in matters of culture, the growth of the soil required centuries of increment before a fair crop could be harvested. Everything in the early periods is derivative, partial, uncertain. Original gifts seem crude, helped hardly at all by cultural environment.

Only three poets included in this volume were born before the Revolution; two of these (Anne Bradstreet and Edward Taylor) were given their certainty by their religion, while the third (Philip Freneau) attains his through England's neo-classic poetic diction, *scuola di* Thomas Gray—so that for my money, if not for Mr. Williams', Freneau's idyllic Indians are far less convincing than Longfellow's Hiawatha:

Here still an aged elm aspires,
Beneath whose far-projecting shade
(And which the shepherd still admires)
The children of the forest played!

Edward Taylor's unmistakable poetic gift, a discovery of the last decade, is lonely and self-fertilized. He can write with all the packed idiosyncratic wealth of Hopkins—

Heav'ns whelm'd-down crystal meal bowl.

Yet in comparison with Marvell's "Thoughts in a Garden," how homespun and quaint and undisciplined, in spite of all its freshness, is this stanza from his "Meditation Eight":

When that this bird of paradise put in
This wicker cage (my corps) to tweedle praise
Had pecked the fruit forbid: and so did fling
Away its food, and lost its golden days,
It fell into celestial famine sore,
And never could attain a morsel more.

A thin derivative culture—less a "New" England than a colonial England still rickety and transplanted even after it had pulled itself loose from its roots across the sea—may account for Mr. Williams' impatience with Bryant, Whittier, Longfellow, Holmes, and Lowell. Perhaps, as Mr. Williams seems to think, American poetry began to save itself through native subject matter. If Whittier's "Snowbound" does not make the grade, at least Emerson's "The Snowstorm" is included. And Emerson's "The Rhodora," Freneau's "The Wild Honeysuckle," though they sound as if they were written by travellers from England, celebrate the flora of America.

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A perpetual joy in this volume, if it is read chronologically, is to hear suddenly a new and authentic voice. For the nineteenth century it happens with Poe and Melville, even more with Emily Dickinson, most of all, of course, with Walt Whitman. Convention (as opposed to tradition) drops away, and an individual poet speaks. It happens again when (still holding to the chronology of birthdates) Ezra Pound follows Sara Teasdale, or E. E. Cummings follows Mark Van Doren, or Hart Crane follows Louise Bogan.

The discovery of America is a theme in this volume. Walt Whitman is here our Columbus, and what lover of poetry would deny that 1855, when *Leaves of Grass* was published in its first form, is a more important date than 1492? America is discovered again in Masters' *Spoon River Anthology* and in Crane's *The Bridge*, and by Frost and Sandburg and Lindsay and Williams and MacLeish and Eberhart and Shapiro. The list could go on.

Yet love of America makes an odd subject for amatory verse. It may lead to Whitman's train-announcer's catalogue of names, or to symbolic apotheoses of Pocahontas or of Route U. S. 1 (or in prose, of the Forty-Second Parallel), or to MacLeish's tawny flanks of the Midwest, or to Millay's holding the world close but not close enough, or to verse of Social Significance. The beloved is rather large, and the larger it grows, the more strained the embraces, the hollower the protestations, of the lover. Whitman's generous naïveté is necessary to protect the giant asseverations from resembling the popular song in which the singer, embracing his ample maiden, meets a man coming around the other side. How can "the local green," to use Robert Frost's phrases, suggest "the universal blue"? By and large, American poets have not yet learned the answer.

We are continually confronted by the fact of bigness. The typical American, if you can find him at all, has little to guide him in distinguishing between bigness and greatness. Our national history is the conquering of a continent and the subduing of matter through efficient action. A magnificent achievement, but to what end? Pragmatic and extroverted, we are better at counting and performing than at valuing. Often this leads in verse to a sort of impatient optimism, as if a loud-voiced alignment of the poet with the good constituted good poetry. Whitman's indiscriminate acceptance of everything, the didacticism of the old New England School or of the proletarian prophets of the Thirties, the unexamined recklessness of many of the younger poets, are all evidence of this cultural callowness. America is still too young a mother to have taught her children maturity or even manners; many of them have tried and are still trying to get the moon by wishing. We wish to be a great—or at least a big—country, and we end with the popular saying: "But right or wrong, my country!"

Most of our poets, of course—since a poet is an individual by professional necessity—are made uneasy by the pressure of this typically American demand, which Mr. Williams himself phrases as: "Poetry should be the expression of the

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whole people, not a private matter." Their rebellion sets up the situation of a tragic split between the artist and society. If this split is to be transient as well as tragic, it can be mended only when our culture is more homogeneous and more general, when there is a little more of the ordinary man in every poet, a little more poetry in every man. Only time—and perhaps such anthologies as these, with what the poets themselves have added, and what their dessemination may accomplish—will make it natural to be an artist in America. For the split is demonstrably present on most of the pages of this book. Mr. Williams notes (rightly, I think) that the one movement or "school" that has made a popular impression and influenced a number of important talents has been Imagism—which was a reaction against tub-thumping and popular sentiment in favor of the cool clear little pictures of unimpassioned art. A large number of the poets have led part of their lives as exiles or expatriates. The artist is lonely, or separated from something, or uneasy, or questioning. He flees to poetry for consolation and confession, as a young girl might turn to her dearest secret diary. He asserts his individuality, instead of assuming it. He remains an unreconstructed rebel, for what he finds in America often wears for him the guise of the carpetbagger or the victorious stranger from the North. And he proclaims—the well-known words must satisfy a deep national craving—"Give me liberty, or give me death."

Liberty from what and toward what goal? The liberty is there all right—in the rich variety of styles and interests that juxtaposes Vachel Lindsay and Wallace Stevens, H. D. and Robinson Jeffers and Marianne Moore, Laura Riding and Ogden Nash. There is liberty in technique: one would need a Patent Office to keep track of all the fresh devices and novelties and inventions since the days of Whitman's lariat lines and Emily Dickinson's acrid off-rhymes. And in the twentieth century, liberty in structure and rhythm has become so general that it is in danger of becoming a tyranny of uniform looseness.

If the American poets have been given liberty, they have also been given death. "The American death wish is very strong and the poets have voiced it," says Mr. Williams. Yet this again is but a sign that they have not found the basis for living. "My life closed twice before its close," writes Emily Dickinson, and everyone knows that Poe wrote from a ghoul-haunted tomb, or that Whitman called upon "lovely and soothing Death!" From Bryant's resigned "Thanatopsis" to Cummings' Buffalo Bill—"Jesus he was a handsome man"—the preoccupation with death runs through all gradations, and America's thwarted hasty hopes and Alexandrian skepticism bear ashen fruit. Envy and glory and contentment and animal ecstasy are all seen as "meaning Death."

Mr. Williams notes acutely that "we have produced almost no first-rate personal love poems." Is society again at fault, so that in America the poet has not yet learned to be natural with himself or with others? What odd transmogrifications cause Emily Dickinson to turn her love poems in upon her-

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self like daggers? Or Poe to invent Lenore and Psyche and Annabel Lee? Or Whitman to embrace a continent of camerados? Or Eliot to be troubled almost to revulsion by memories of *la figlia che piange?* Or Crane to fall in love with a bridge? Perhaps the genuinely free personality is the last achievement of a perfected and stable culture, and even "first-rate personal love poems" depend upon society.

If these remarks so far have been tinged with some of the gloom of an autopsy, they might close on cheerier tones. Almost any reader may make discoveries or rediscoveries. I had not realized, for instance, how good a poet Trumbull Stickney was. Nor for Hart Crane, that other inheritor of unfulfilled renown, how much more clearly his beautiful poem comes out, now that his discoveries have become, in the work of others, part of our common poetic heritage. Nor, until I read him in chronological context (since we are speaking of "Who fished the murex up?"), had I realized with full impact how deeply indebted modern poetry is to the freshness of Ezra Pound. Since it is not the fashion to allow ourselves sentiment, we should be grateful also for a little salt of satire, and we may find it in Robinson and Frost, or in the outrageous fun of Cummings and Ogden Nash and Auden. They make it easier to breathe. We cannot generalize, either, that American poets are "spottily educated" or write as if they had just escaped from college, so long as men like Wallace Stevens and T. S. Eliot are composing poems. Nor is it safe to say that American poetry is too careless of form, when one considers the aristocratic perfection of Elinor Wylie and Marianne Moore and John Crowe Ransom. And what nation (or civilization, since England is intimately involved) need worry about its poetic present or future if it can produce in the last half-century poets of the substance and stature of Frost and Eliot and Auden?

It was a generous gesture on Mr. Williams' part to include as a coda at least token pieces from thirty-one poets writing in the Forties, and I shall not spoil it by ungenerously mentioning any of the numerous poets, equally good, whom he was compelled to omit. At any rate such representations—and some of those he includes were born as late as the Twenties—indicate that there is a hope for poetry.

The hope for poetry in America lies in the gradual building up of a higher general base for culture. In this communal enterprise, no poet, no poetaster, no reader is completely unimportant. Finally the coral island may rise above the sea. Our civilization and our art are just beginning. After slow time we may attain to an American divinity. As the Wallam Olum draws it:

Or, for those who cannot read picture-writing, in the words of the Amerindians: "kitanitowit manito manitoak." Translated, in case you have forgotten your Lenni Lenape: "God creator he made the makers."

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In the Caged Panther's Eyes

HUGH KENNER

THE PISAN CANTOS, by *Ezra Pound*. New Directions. $2.75.

ONE OPENS, AND FINDS ON THE FIRST PAGE:

> *yet say this to the Possum: a bang, not a whimper,*
> *with a bang not with a whimper,*
> *To build the city of Dioce whose terraces are the colour of stars.*
> *The suave eyes, quiet, not scornful,*
> *rain also is of the process.*
> *What you depart from is not the way*
> *and olive tree blown white in the wind*
> *washed in the Kiang and Han*
> *what whiteness will you add to this whiteness,*
> *what candor?*

There is still no one, Mr. Eliot has said of these latest Cantos, who can write like that. Were it not that the relations between poet and audience have deteriorated steadily since at least the 18th century, it would be merely presumptuous to say more. What kind of importance the Cantos have, or are going to have, is not for an immediate contemporary to decide; and of the language one can remark only, within its own standards, the perfection. Things being as they are, though, to offer one's reader some insight into his own presumptive neglect of one of the few comprehensive masters of technique in the history of English verse may be a legitimate function for a reviewer.

The reader's curiosity may perhaps be jogged in this way: how is it, now that Joyce, Eliot, and Yeats are getting assimilated—not, certainly, on their own terms, but to some extent assimilated—how is it that Pound's reputation alone remains so much a matter of inert convention? Why is the master whose crucial influence Eliot has always acknowledged, to whom he dedicated *The Waste Land* as *il miglior fabbro*, and to whom he has devoted at least four long essays; who was probably the efficient cause in the abolition of Yeats' early "poetical" manner; of whom Joyce said "We all owe him much, and I most of all surely"; why is he so little discussed and, one suspects, less read?

The same question might be asked of Ben Jonson, Landor, and Browning; who languish today in the shade of, respectively, Shakespeare, Shelley, and Tennyson, as Pound in the shade of Eliot. Pound, with his multi-lingual erudition, his orientation toward politics rather than psychology, his exact critical sense issuing in precise and unequivocal judgments, his abrupt handling of fools, and his "poetry of the surface," which as Eliot said of Jonson's "cannot be under-

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stood without study, for to deal with the surface of life, as Jonson dealt with it, is to deal so deliberately that we too must be deliberate, in order to understand"; Pound on all these points has many claims to be considered the contemporary Ben Jonson. If that be so, the popularity of Eliot rather than Pound is analogous to the popularity, in our time, of Donne rather than Jonson. And explaining this latter popularity Eliot has said of a group of poets antithetic to Jonson, including Shakespeare, Donne, Marlowe, and Webster, that while in the end more difficult, "they offer something at the start to encourage the student or to satisfy those who want nothing more; they are suggestive, evocative, a phrase, a voice. . . . But the polished veneer of Jonson reflects only the lazy reader's fatuity; unconscious does not respond to unconscious; no swarms of inarticulate feelings are aroused." His words, like Pound's, have not that "network of tentacular roots reaching down to the deepest terrors and desires." That is why so many readers feel that Pound has "nothing to say" to the modern mind: no relevance to the problems of contemporary living.

It is on this latter kind of relevance, manifested by the rousing of "swarms of inarticulate feelings," that the placing of poets during their lifetime is based. No one now reads Tennyson with much avidity, and no more sermons are likely to take heart from *In Memoriam;* but for the nineteenth century relevance to contemporary emotional problems was decidedly what Tennyson had and Browning had not. (This is not to imply that Browning suffers today a wholly undeserved neglect, though it was not a response to his real strength that made him forty years ago the congenial lay preacher of Presbyterians, and in their concession to popular romantic psychology his best known poems are probably his worst: Pound is right in singling out for praise the "unreadable" *Sordello.*) But the contrast is instructive. Browning in the passage from *Sordello* that Pound exhibits in *The ABC of Reading* is an incomparably better writer of English, has his medium more thoroughly under control, than Tennyson anywhere. Yet no man could have been more unfortunate in his adherents (hence his present semi-jocular status) and they adhered for the wrong reasons (as have most of Pound's). The reading public put its money on Tennyson, unconscious responding to unconscious, swarms of inarticulate feelings being aroused.

Pound is a far more important figure than Browning or Landor, Eliot than Tennyson or Shelley. One must return to the contrast between Jonson and his darkly articulate contemporaries for an analogy similar in magnitude as well as in principle. But the principle, that on which literary reputations are formed, has been valid since the overt collapse, contemporary with Shakespeare, of the moral and political structure of western Europe. Ever since then the artist has been looked to for psychological ordering, for a carthartic action in which the moral fears and confusions of the audience could be implicated and purged. That is why Aristotle's notion of catharsis has been so violently disputed, as

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failing to correspond with modern experience: in the Greek drama of which he wrote the cathartic function, united with a body of political and religious convictions, took place less in the recesses of the psyche than at a level of ritual, of habituated intelligibility, which corresponds to the philosopher's detached, almost offhand tone. It is also why the recent vogue of Dante, the exponent of a corresponding Christian order, is even in Eliot a bit wistful; and why Chaucer, who is strongly in the Ben Jonson-Pound tradition, is not read as literature but as philology.

Many of Mr. Eliot's phalanx of readers undoubtedly draw this sort of psychic nourishment from his pages. They note with pleasure that he inhabits their hell, or else they find the Reverend Eliot *persona* reassuring. "It's so beautifully *morbid,*" said a debutante to the present reviewer, of *The Hollow Men;* and Anne Morrow Lindbergh has taken to quoting his later poetry in *The Reader's Digest.* This is not, of course, a judgment on Mr. Eliot, since the same is true of Donne and Shakespeare; though it goes far to explain the fluctuations of his reputation as his foci of interest have shifted and one body of admirers, with a feeling of being cruelly cheated, has allowed itself to be replaced by another. It also explains why Pound, who is not susceptible of this kind of misreading, has had, in an age that does not really care for poetry except as therapeutic, except among the top half-dozen intellects next to no reputation at all. On page 76 of the present volume Pound adverts to this situation in his own way:

Curious, is it not, that Mr. Eliot
has not given more time to Mr. Beddoes
(T. L.) prince of morticians
where none can speak his language
centuries hoarded
to pull up a mass of algae
(and pearls)
or the odour of eucalyptus or sea wrack

and in further allusion to the connoisseur of Practical Cats:

Prowling night-puss leave my hard squares alone
they are in no case cat food . . .
you can neither eat manuscript nor Confucius
nor even the Hebrew scriptures . . .
the cat-faced eucalyptus nib
is where you cannot get at it
Tune: kitten on the keys
radio steam Calliope
following the Battle Hymn of the Republic
where the honey-wagon cease from stinking
and the nose be at peace

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"mi-hine eyes hev"
well yes they have
seen a good deal of it
there is a good deal to be seen
fairly tough and unblastable
and the hymn . . .
well in contrast to the god-*damned crooning*
put me down for the temporis acti

When Pound thus sets The Battle Hymn of the Republic against the "crooning," his alignment with Browning, and Eliot's in some respects with Tennyson, is plain. The crooner in Tennyson, like the voice that in the HMV recordings intones the more unctuous periods of *Little Gidding*, had a temporary appeal to temporary psychic dislocations. This is not, once more, to devalue Eliot's position as one of the greatest poets in the language, past or present. It is merely to indicate that he is not much enjoyed at his own level; that much of his appeal is a therapeutic, cathartic appeal. The highbrow's Sinatra. Tennyson's reputation was *merely* so based, or more nearly. But beneath the cathartic crooner indulged in by so many, there lies the great Eliot whom nobody reads. Just as there is a Pound whom, more literally, nobody reads, because he does not lend himself to the illusion of having a crooner facade.

It is not so easy, with the present collection carrying the work to within sixteen cantos of the end and the large design all but realized, to dismiss the *Cantos* as either formless or irrelevant. As to their form, that was hardly to be deduced from the first thirty, on the basis of which most of the extant critical generalizations have been made (Eliot remarks of Jonson, in an essay that is the best possible introduction to Pound since the masculine polarity represented by both men, however rare, is permanent, that his immediate appeal is to the mind; "his emotional tone is not in the single verse, but in the design of the whole"). And as to their relevance (though relation to contemporary exigencies is not in Pound's view necessarily a merit in verse, and he has somewhere indicated his feeling that the *Cantos* are even somewhat deformed thereby), it is important to see that Pound impinges on the citizen A.D. 1948 not via his psychological tensions (which is the one kind of relevance we have been taught to respect) but through an amalgam of morals and politics. "There is no mystery about the Cantos," he writes in *Culture*. "They are the tale of the tribe." So they are. And the *Pisan Cantos* should be approached through the preceding 73 sections, though they are perhaps unusually rich in passages of immediate lyrical appeal to the casual or uninstructed reader.

Pound's structural unit is not unlike the Joycean epiphany: a highly concentrated manifestation of a moral, cultural, or political quiddity. Joyce once epiphanized a whole sermon, audience, theme, and preacher, in nine words:

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"Pilate! Why don't you old back that owlin mob?" Pound's method, like that of *Finnegans Wake*, is the studied juxtaposition of such revelations, presenting through the convention (in the present section) of a prisoner's reverie, detailed, graspable ideograms of entire cultures and sensibilities. The reader should beware of mistaking the casual look of the page for evidence of sloppiness or low intensity (a major mistake underlying the failure of Pound's prose to connect with a wide audience). Pound has attained new heights of rhetorical skill, in which the spatial disposition of every word is functional; the reader who has followed his technical progress will see in a passage like the following the climax of a long development:

Here are lynxes *Here are lynxes,*
Is there a sound in the forest
of pard or of bassarid
of crotale or of leaves moving?

Cythera, here are lynxes
Will the scrub-oak burst into flower?
There is a rose vine in this underbrush
Red? White? No, but a colour between them
When the pomegranate is open and the light falls
half thru it

In such a passage (more representative than it seems) the rhetoric of the indentations, in enacting a tension between ecstatic arrest and rhythmic chant, should escape no one. A variation on this device is Mr. Pound's notorious interruption of lyric passages by the symbols of commerce found on every typewriter keyboard; a subtle and ironic instrument of tension:

in principio verbum
paraclete or the verbum perfectum: sinceritas
from the death cells in sight of Mt. Taishan @ Pisa

The reader should also beware, as the last quotation may remind us, of supposing that the *Pisan Cantos* are to be taken as inextricably involved in the accident of Pound's imprisonment in an open-air cage in Pisa. The cage and the later prison camp are explicitly present throughout:

"When every hollow is full
it moves forward"
to the phantom mountain above the cloud
But in the caged panther's eyes:

"Nothing. Nothing that you can do . . ."

green pool, under green of the jungle,
caged: "Nothing, nothing that you can do."

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But the *Pisan Cantos* are not to be taken as mere reminiscences of a crusty prisoner. Their integration into the growing whole, the cunning with which Pound has taken advantage of an external (and damnable) situation to reinforce the structure of his epic with a time-capsule of contemporary Europe in juxtaposition to the immediately preceding sections on Adams and Confucius, should not escape the reader who takes the trouble to go through the entire work. It is a tribute as much to his technique as to his integrity that Cantos 52 to 73, with the new material to counterpoint them, seem no longer as dull or as pointless as when they appeared.

The reader who approaches Pound, or the *Cantos*, for the first time through the present volume may do well to whet his appetite on such sustained magnificence as the lynx-chorus beginning on page 68, or the *libretto* and consequent fugue,

> *The ant's a centaur in his dragon world.*
> *Pull down thy vanity, it is not man*
> *Made courage, or made order, or made grace,*
> *Pull down thy vanity, I say pull down.*
> *Learn of the green world what can be thy place*
> *In scaled invention or true artistry,*
> *Pull down thy vanity,*
> *Paquin pull down!*
> *The green casque has outdone your elegance. . . .*

on pages 97 to 100. He might then work into the overall method by savouring the ideogram of specifically English culture beginning on page 92 ("Oh to be in England now that Winston's out"), running through the superb quatrains that mark one of the peaks of Pound's lyric achievement:

> *Tudor indeed is gone and every rose,*
> *Blood-red, blanch-white that in the sunset glows*
> *Cries: "Blood, Blood, Blood!" against the gothic stone*
> *Of England, as the Howard or Boleyn knows.*

Having sensed the relation of the items on these last pages, he could pass without difficulty to the superb 83rd Canto, taking perhaps *Gerontion* as a point of reference; after which, and after such further dipping as arrests him, and fortified by as much as possible of Pound's prose (especially *Culture* and the crucial translation of *The Unwobbling Pivot* of Confucius) he should begin at Canto I and progress through the work as a whole. There may then be some hope of his perceiving the rationale (*res*, not *verba;* and intellectual, not psychological) of the *Cantos*. He may also perceive how the author of

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Evening is like a curtain of cloud,
a blurr above ripples; and through it
sharp long spikes of cinnamon,
a cold tune amid reeds

is also the author of

Usura rusteth the chisel
It rusteth the craft and the craftsman
It gnaweth the thread in the loom
None learneth to weave gold in her pattern;

and even, and within the same work, of:

An' the fuzzy bloke sez (legs no pants ever wd. fit) 'IF
that is so any government worth a damn can
pay dividends?'
The major chewed a bit and sez: 'Y—es, eh . . .
You mean instead of collectin' taxes?'

And he may finally perceive that author's alignment with the author of *Volpone* or the author of *The Pardoner's Tale.*

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The Rebirth of Allegory

WILLIAM TROY

THE PLAGUE, by *Albert Camus*. Knopf. $3.
CALIGULA and CROSS PURPOSES, by *Albert Camus*. New Directions. $3.
THE BLOOD OF OTHERS, by *Simone de Beauvoir*. Knopf. $3.
MODERN FRENCH SHORT STORIES, edited by *John Lehmann*. New Directions. $3.

WHEN THE SO-CALLED EXISTENTIAL MOVEMENT—with its internal splinterings, its transparent intrigues, and its political reverberations—is finally seen with some perspective it will be found to bear an odd resemblance to a whole school of writing that flourished late in the Roman decadence. Of Prudentius and the other poets of this period we have no more fascinating account than is to be found in Helen Waddell's little book *The Wandering Scholars*. Like them Sartre, Camus and Beauvoir are engaged in producing variations on the general form of the *Psychomachia*—the battle of the soul with the body. The form of the novel in their hands becomes that of a dialogue on most of the classical problems of philosophy—freedom and necessity, truth and illusion, and especially, of course, essence and existence. Certainly the second of Camus' novels is hardly more than a string of such dialogues, interspersed with long passages of naturalistic detail reminiscent of but never quite equalling in power Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*. The book by Simone de Beauvoir does not rely on the same kind of large controlling symbol but is based on an extended and repetitious interior monologue on the subject of being and guilt. This is to say that the Existential novel continues to assume more of the character of a treatise than of the modern European novel as we have known it. They are closer to a medieval allegorical work like *The Romaunt of the Rose* than to anything by Flaubert or Dostoievski or James. Although regarded in some quarters as perhaps the last word in the novel, they actually turn the clock back as far as fiction technique is concerned and cast aside nearly all the aesthetic gains which the novel has made in the last hundred years. It is rather paradoxical that these believers in "existence," in the superiority of real or concrete *lived* experience over whatever abstract constructions our minds make of it, should be so little gifted in endowing their works with either reality or concreteness. Body is pared down to essentials to humor soul: the dust-cover of Camus' book shows one skeletal figure crouched over another, and this is as descriptive an advertisement of it as might have been conceived.

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The Latin poems of the type of the *Psychomachia* appeared at a moment of universal world-weariness, when the imagination of Western Europe had been drained white. So obvious are the parallels with our own time that they need scarcely be described. What is important is how influential the pattern of the Existential novel will be upon the whole direction of the novel. Paris, at least in these matters, is our Rome, and as Paris goes usually goes the rest of our literature. Is the novel to undergo the same formal paralysis that it suffered under naturalism, which was also the substitution of ideas *about* life for a recreation of its immediacy and felt values? Perhaps the Existential novel will justify its name and take on existence; in the meantime, it is a pretty lean kind of ghost.

The trouble with the allegory in Camus' novel is the trouble with all allegory —monotony. One of the characters in the book is playing a phonograph record.

> "Rather a boring record," Rambert remarked. "And this must be the tenth time I've put it on today."
>
> "Are you really so fond of it?"
>
> "No, but it's the only one I have." And after a moment he added: "That's what I said 'it' was—the same thing over and over again."

The "it" to which he refers is the plague; and that is exactly what the plague becomes for us. Once one has the key, or the general "idea," the book loses any strong principle of development, becoming no more than a hard-working demonstration, in Camus' admirable prose, of the resemblance between human existence on this planet and plague conditions in a large North African city. "Yes, plague, like abstraction, was monotonous," the narrator himself admits; and we share the sentiment only too well. Exactly the same kind of aesthetic objection may be raised (by those honest enough to register it) against the writer who has most influenced Camus and his group—Franz Kafka.

For the revival of allegory there are reasons enough to be sure, and the greatest of them is that we are in our time reduced, morally and spiritually, to an "extreme situation." We at last have been forced to cut away the *accidentia* of our distressful historical situation and concentrate upon the inherent terror involved in the human substance. This leads to an ever sharper definition of the terms of our plight; definition is abstraction; and abstraction spells allegory. In the nineteenth century *The Brothers Karamazov* and *Moby Dick* were great works of literature capable of being interpreted on the allegorical plane. But Dostoievski and Melville were still interested enough in individual character in all its full-blooded contradictoriness to give us an image as well as a statement about life. In both of these the philosophical and psychological are inseparable; the former grows out of the latter before our eyes. If none of the Existentialists has so far created a single character of any dimen-

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sions, it may be because our age demands not the unique but "extreme," not the individual but the typical. We require a diagram of our calamity.

The two plays by Camus are of earlier composition and do not reflect the ultimate tenderness achieved in *The Plague*. His Caligula is even more monstrous than the historical model since he is constructed on the hypothesis that a human individual might really desire to attain absolute freedom. The play is largely chatter and bombast, its final meaning equivocal. *Cross Purposes* is better dramatically, at least must be quite harrowing on the stage, and through the feelings of the mother at the end does restore us to the humanly plausible. But neither play engages in us the kind of credulity that we expect from serious drama.

Insofar as Camus has any positive philosophy it is stated mid-way in *The Plague*:

> The evil that is in the world always comes of ignorance, and good intentions may do as much harm as malevolence, if they lack understanding. On the whole men are more good than bad. . . . But they are more or less ignorant, and it is this that we call vice or virtue; the most incorrigible vice being that of an ignorance that fancies it knows everything and therefore claims for itself the right to kill . . . and there can be no true goodness nor true love without the utmost clear-sightedness.

With this conclusion we cannot but agree; it puts Camus clearly on the side of the angels. And if the book is read for what it is, a discourse on matters touching us all everywhere today, it should give much satisfaction to readers stifled by the moral emptiness of most recent fiction—especially in this country.

The Beauvoir novel is also filled with what we call "fine feelings." It has a splendid theme: "the curse of being" by which our freedom of action is purchased only at the cost of some evil effect upon someone else, even someone whom we love. But the theme is vaguely handled: the hero, a worker in the Resistance, is technically responsible for sending his mistress to her death but he had no choice in the matter. The Dostoievskian formula that "each of us is responsible for everything and to every human being" is reiterated throughout the night he spends watching at the dying girl's bedside. But it remains a formula rather than a truth evolving from the pattern of the action.

The only items of interest in the collection of short stories are Sartre's "The Wall" and "The Room," and these, which were written before this writer's announcement of positive humanism, are infused with that virulent *delectatio morbosa* which places him closer to Céline than to Camus. Of all the members of the group Sartre is least endowed with the narrative gift, coldest in feeling, and most expert in sophistry.

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Recent Fiction

R. W. FLINT

FIRE IN THE MORNING, by *Elizabeth Spencer*. Dodd, Mead & Company. $3.00.
TIME WILL DARKEN IT, by *William Maxwell*. Harper and Bros. $3.00.
THE HEART OF THE MATTER, by *Graham Greene*. The Viking Press. $3.00.
BULLIVANT AND THE LAMBS, by *Ivy Compton-Burnett*. Alfred A. Knopf. $3.00.
THE WORLD IS A WEDDING, by *Delmore Schwartz*. New Directions. $2.75.

THE FIVE BOOKS ON MY LIST seem too self-contained to lend themselves to useful generalizing about the state of fiction. Each is justified, as form and performance, by the skill and intelligence of its author. Three of them, Miss Elizabeth Spencer's, Mr. William Maxwell's, and Mr. Graham Greene's, show almost no traces of the principal "revolutions" in modern fiction since the advent of programmatic naturalism in Flaubert. The novelist obtrudes comment ad lib, the narrative is straightforward, explicit and consecutive, the time sense conventional. Miss Compton-Burnett's and Mr. Delmore Schwartz's fictions are superior to the other three in general vitality, and similar, also, curiously enough, in a desiccation and stiffening of the literary surface.

Miss Spencer's subject is the very much worked-over rural Mississippi South. The novel is worth mentioning, I think, as the sign of a cycle come full. Miss Spencer recapitulates this whole tormented material in strikingly cool blood, almost in the genre of the 19th century historical romance. One is reminded of Scott as much as of Faulkner. Good and evil are embodied in families and dramatized by their different attitudes toward the land; an articulate local character, who might well be a wise old monk or village curate, provides a link with the past and a heavy vein of romantic moralizing. How is it that a strong young novelistic talent, nurtured obviously on Faulkner and sponsored by Robert Penn Warren, can offer her South in such an elegiac mood? At any rate, expectations are lowered and, at a fresh remove from this usually so toxic atmosphere, the reader is genuinely entertained. Miss Spencer's writing shows promise in several directions, and it is to be hoped that she will move on to subjects that can engage her more seriously. I suggest that this first

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novel of hers be read in conjunction with Mr. Faulkner's latest, *Intruder in the Dust*. In the Faulkner novel the negro is the overwhelming moral victor; in Miss Spencer's the negro plays no moral role at all.

Time Will Darken It is another Mr. Maxwell's gentle, imaginative re-creations of mid-western American life. Mr. Maxwell subscribes heavily to the turn-of-the-century school of American nostalgia as a matter of doctrine, although his novel has few marks of the period-piece on it. The tenor seems quite modern in its vacillation between calculated despair and a delicate excruciation of moral feeling, teetering always on the edge of sentimentality. *Time Will Darken It*, for all its many episodic successes, especially with local speech idioms, interested me less than its predecessor, *The Folded Leaf*. Having assumed an adolescent culture, one might as well write mainly about children and adolescents, which seems to be what Mr. Maxwell can do best. The book is superior fiction of *New Yorker* standards.

Along with Mr. Graham Greene's new novel, Viking has supplied a booklet of gratuitous information for reviewers, on the cover of which, bordered by a bilious grey-green, is a sepia portrait of the novelist. Inside, a number of his English colleagues make liberal use of the adjective "great." My own reaction lies somewhere between these latter and the rather doctrinaire dismissals of Mr. Jacques Barzun in *Harpers* and Mr. George Orwell in *The New Yorker*. English Catholicism took such body blows during and immediately after the Reformation that it has lacked the broad social roots for strong art. Virtually all modern English Catholic writing is the work of converts, writers on whom the Catholic psychology and dogma were imposed over a ground-structure of deeply Protestant habits. No post-Reformation English writers have been able to rival, *as Catholics*, the Catholic writers of the Continent, (among whom we should count Joyce) and to compare Mr. Greene with Mauriac, Aeschylus, Kafka and Dostoevsky, as one of the Viking French critics has done, seems a desperate expedient to make one's point.

The Heart of the Matter seems to me three kinds of novel joined, spliced, or fastened together, rather than a single imaginative act. Some of it is *genuine* high-class Maugham Hollywood, some is *genuine*, but rudimentary, religious drama, some is a third thing which Mr. Trilling specifies as "a tragedy of modern love." There is enough skill and sincerity in the treatment of these separate parts to satisfy all but a recalcitrant few of the partisan critics. I suppose that, ultimately, the religious part loses much of its force by being embedded in a deliberately stagey, contrived narrative (one can be sincerely stagey and contrived). The literature of desolation, like the literature of ecstasy, always suffers from being too literal. Neither Mr. Greene nor the English Kafka-imitator, Rex Warner, have shown themselves capable yet of the sustained imaginative and speculative efforts of a real Kafka. The symbolism in Mr. Greene's novel fails to carry through, fails to sustain, by the implicit

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poetry of which Mr. Schwartz is a master, the uncritical parts of the narrative. Perhaps we should be thankful that he has left well enough alone and not tried to inject poetry intravenously. He remains true to his gift and consequently writes a more serious, moving novel than any of his earlier fictions.

A word on the narrative technique. When, in a fairly short novel, a large amount of action must be covered, neatly, forcefully, with no loose ends whatever, little space is left for establishing "tone." At his best Mr. Greene can do this in the act of advancing his action, but he more frequently resorts to a relentless hammering of atmospheric effects, all in the same key. A cockroach sits on the wall "like a large blood-blister." The priest's laugh is the bell of "a leper proclaiming his misery." Food is always horrible. "They seemed to be sitting miles apart separated by a waste of dishes. The food chilled on their plates" (although the heat is supposed to be ferocious). Except for one dawn and one sunset, the physical detail is edgy, verging on nausea, without the exotic complaisance of Sartre. Rain falls like tears, or in "grey, ecclesiastical folds." Similarly, on the level of moral action and comment, the effects are also monotonous; the worst is always true. "Point me out the happy man and I will point you out either egotism, selfishness, evil—or else an absolute ignorance."—"He listened with the intense interest one feels in a stranger's life, the interest the young mistake for love."—". . . what experience had taught him, that no human being can really understand another. . . ."—". . . but in human love there is never such a thing as victory. . . ."—and so on. To illustrate one of these aphorisms alone would support a lifetime's patient work; stuffed into the book in such profusion they provide mainly a shallow emotional coloring, an induced nausea that is usually of the essence of craft rather than art.

Modern Catholic fiction suffers, as one might suspect, from the late-Catholic habit of denying, implicitly, the fallen nature of mind. The dramatic device left to the author operating inside an accepted authoritarianism is to patronize the deity. (Of course, this is *self*-censorship, however crippling it may seem.) Mr. Greene does this, sincerely and even movingly, but to such an extent that his hero, Scobie, seems to be destroyed by his religion without receiving any of its benefits. Which, like making Scobie's religious literalism a concomitant of his simple goodwill, is mainly art for the uncircumcised. Mr. Greene must know better.

None of the above considerations are important outside of the novel's critical reception and the problem of religious fiction. As a tight, absorbing, pathetic narrative, it is near impeccable. The conversation is vivid. Once again one wonders at the literary uses of a unified culture, permitting marvels of economy and expressiveness, even among these rocks,

Miss Compton-Burnett writes an amusing, highly mannered, and extraordinarily tough drawing-room comedy. In England she is commonly rated

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with Graham Greene and Joyce Cary. It is probably this unexpected toughness, rather than her manner, that has prevented her currency in America. Our toughness is usually some sort of violence begot by moral innocence or diffidence. Miss Compton-Burnett has the enormous asset of a seasoned, complex knowledge of motive. Her mind is tough all the way through. Of the others on my list, Mr. Schwartz resembles her most in imaginative ground covered. While Mr. Schwartz's work is too *sui generis* to be classified, Miss Compton-Burnett writes pure comedy; her whole effect is in the words, with nothing left around the edges. She also has a knack for the elaborate plot, with characters balanced off against each other, situation against situation, mood against mood, very much in the tradition of Restoration comedy, and the strains of that tradition surviving in the modern masters of the English comic box-office. Each of her characters is candid to the limit of his or her candor and articulate to the limit of the language at the author's disposal. One recognizes this immediately as a *theatrical* rather than a novelistic technique and, indeed, Miss Compton-Burnett's novel may be the English version of our American best-seller with an eye cocked on Hollywood. A large, genteel Protestant family is bullied by the typical canting family tyrant. The novel's first half explores moral adjustments inside this strangely isolated, strangely assorted family, from the most sensitive child to the thoroughly calloused butler. When things have reached an intolerable pitch of moral cruelty, mother is removed and the father forced into an absurd change of heart. It is no more sanguine a book than Mr. Maxwell's or Mr. Greene's, but it is better reading. I must leave the question of "significance" to better qualified judges. Miss Compton-Burnett quotes well. Here is a sample to illustrate the robust, sardonic, humane moral intelligence working behind the verbal horse-play.

> "Is that a fire smoking?" said Horace Lamb.
>
> "Yes, it appears to be, my dear boy."
>
> "I am not asking what it appears to be doing. I asked if it was smoking."
>
> "Appearances are not held to be a clue to the truth," said his cousin, "but we seem to have no other."
>
> Horace advanced into the room as though his attention were withdrawn from his surroundings.
>
> "Good morning," he said in a preoccupied tone, that changed as his eyes resumed their direction. "It does seem that the fire is smoking."
>
> "It is in the stage when smoke is produced. So it is hard to see what it can do."
>
> "Did you really not understand me?"
>
> "Yes, yes, my dear boy. It is giving out some smoke. We must say that it is."

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The joke is the old joke of self-deception, masked moral aggression and the subtle forms of self-torture developed in a stagnant society.

The virtues of Mr. Schwartz's fiction are so many and so closely involved that the critic is hard put to know where to plunge. Its fullness and weight demands an answering fullness of response. Wallace Stevens, oracular among his jacket-fellows, writes, "His thoughtful and apparently simple pages are pages of the book of the world of these years." The same might be said, of course, of any good modern fiction, but one suspects, not by Mr. Stevens. An old practitioner of the fullsome, the orotund, greets a younger. Not to stick in a odd comparison, let me add that Mr. Schwartz's fiction teaches a profound lesson in literary economics; he has reached his center by foregoing just that vein of literary splendor and complication in which Stevens' poetry, as well as post-naturalist fiction like the later Joyce and Faulkner, reached theirs.

One need only say, "Ecce opera!" As Mr. William Carlos Williams claims to be "the happy genius of my household," as Joyce was of his or Mann of his, Mr. Schwartz tells most of what we can bear to hear of our existences through the perfect medium of his own. The restraint of his literary means sets off the richness of his matter as the rigor of plainsong or the limited conventions of Byzantine art worked to the same end. We have here the same sort of literary primitivism, roughly speaking, that Miss Compton-Burnett exercizes for the sake of her comedy. Much of the fun in *Bullivant* is the use of a polite officialese to express a cut-throat, wholly modern moral insight; Delmore Schwartz has a more sensitive ear for the same kind of circumlocution; except that his delicately diffident pomposity, his deliberate, solemn relishing of characterless English, his use of the language as if it were already thoroughly dead and international, is an important part of the *determined* substance of his stories.

A critic has described his subject as the travail of the New York Ashkenazim during the depression years, and expressed his doubts as to whether the stories could mean much to the *goyim* of the backwoods. This seems to me rather an ill-considered tactic. There simply is no *goyim* and no backwoods in that sense. Mr. Schwartz's moral, political, philosophical, and poetic insight is comprehensive enough to speak for the entire middle class (and what other class do we have in America?). On the simplest level, the stories treat of the efforts of a tight social group to right itself in a commercial society after the terrors of emigration. An ominous lack of substantial common meaning appears as soon as the class begins to be established and "Americanized." The older generation could afford the luxury of simple moral heroism. "This is America, Mamma," said Rebecca. "You left Europe twenty-five years ago, but you think about everything as if you were still a girl in Europe." "Money

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is money," said her mother, "it is just as important in America as in Europe." The second generation, however, learns that it is not important in exactly the same way. They feel increasingly dispossessed and stagnant, waiting for an eruption or coalescence of meaning great enough to involve them seriously. The ambitious are deceived by early success, the humane marry dentists, are spoiled, write unperformed plays.

To give such a résumé is barely to touch on the periphery of Mr. Schwartz's admirable stories. Their principal theme is the emergence, haphazardly, of "higher types" within their society and the society's attempts to accommodate these people. The pathos of a gifted, self-sufficient, egotistical "genius" among these ridden, unhappy people is perhaps no greater now than such pathos has ever been, but handled with Mr. Schwartz's unemphatic skill, it astonishes and hurts us like something utterly new. Deeper perhaps but less easy to follow is the theme of the society's slow efforts at self-articulation. The Hart family of *The Child is the Meaning of This Life* attains to it in Jasper, a gauche but successful young lawyer, although Jasper's wisdom goes no further than the lesson embodied in the story's title. Jasper's last words in the story are, "No, I have no light." Rudyard Bell, presiding spirit of the richest of the stories, *The World is a Wedding,* stands between Jasper and Shenandoah Fish, he who shall finally speak peace to the heathen. In his public guise as "Mr. Fish," Shenandoah, in *A Bitter Farce,* wins the battle of articulation before an audience of Naval officers learning grammar, but it turns out to be only a word-play, after which he had to go "to his home to await the arrival of innumerable anxiety feelings which had their source in events which had occurred for the past five thousand years."

If this is the climax of the book with its melting into unknown pressures of the past, *The World is a Wedding* is the most substantial and suggestive of the stories. Here Mr. Schwartz sets up as polar opposites the talented, independent brother and the self-sacrificing, unloved, capable, earthy sister, around whom revolve a "circle" of variously unhappy individuals who are both convincing in themselves and masks or permutations of the two polar types. Before the circle breaks up, its members try to work out formulae for existence that will satisfy everyone. Inevitably they fail. The success of the story is line by line, episode by episode.

> "First of all," said Rudyard, to defend his reading, "when I read at dinner it is a manifestation of the truly human. You know very well that if I were an animal, I would take my food somewhere and eat it alone. I would eat it very fast and I would be afraid that some other animal might take it away from me. But since I am a human being and since I have a head," he touched his head as he said this, "eating does not satisfy the whole of my being and it is necessary for me to read."

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"How about conversation?" said Laura, disgruntled and knowing that she had no hope of persuading Rudyard since she never persuaded him of anything. "I suppose conversation is not a purely human activity?"

"It is, it is!" Rudyard replied. "But reading is superior to it, in general, as authors are superior to other human beings. And as for me, my being is such that to satisfy the rational part of it, I must regard the great works of thought and literature."

"Half the time you just read the newspaper," said Laura.

In Yoknapatawpha

EUDORA WELTY

INTRUDER IN THE DUST, by *William Faulkner*. Random House. $3.

WHAT GOES ON HERE? Grave digging. "Digging and undigging." What's in the grave? One body or maybe another, maybe nothing at all—except human shame, something we've done to ourselves. Who digs? Who but the innocent, the young—and the old and female, their burning-up energy generating a radiance over Yoknapatawpha County and its concerns? Not forgetting the Gowrie twins—like the vaudeville team that follows behind the beautiful stars with its hilarious, mechanical parody, the Gowries from the hills dig too.

Intruder in the Dust is a story of the proving of innocence, this proof a maddening physical labor and a horrendous, well-nigh impossible undertaking, full of riddles and always starting over. The real innocents are the provers, the technical innocent is old, black Lucas Beauchamp in danger of lynching for murder of a white man—and Lucas is a lightless character, high-and-mighty and gorgeously irritating, who would be so temptingly guilty if he weren't so irrevocably innocent, just the kind of man to get in just this kind of fix, who has been building up to it all his life, and now, by hints, condescends to be saved, offering cash fees, and requiring a receipt. The provers, exhumers that they have to be, are Miss Eunice Habersham, "a practical woman" in her seventies, who "hadn't taken long . . . to decide that the way to get a dead body up out of a grave was to go out to the grave and dig it up," and the sixteen-year-olds, Charles Mallison, white, Aleck Sander, colored, who end up dog-tired and a step along in man's wisdom. Gavin Stevens, the articulate uncle who by his character partly forecasts and foretells for Charles, and the sighing mother—wonderfully done—are near at hand, summoned or pushed back, and beyond and dipping down is the menacing fringe of the Gowries from the ridges

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of wild Beat Four. Out of the digging comes a solution and an indictment, defining a hope, prayer, that we should one day reach that point where it will be *Thou shalt not kill at all*, where Lucas Beauchamp's life will be secure not despite the fact that he is Lucas Beauchamp but because he is.

The action of *Intruder* is frantic—and meditative, not missing a minute. The more-than-possible failure of the task overhangs it like a big cliff. The suspense is of the chase—sometimes slow-motion, sometimes double-time; leg-work, horses, mules ("unspookable" for this business), pickup trucks, on up to a fast Sheriff's auto, bear the characters toward their grave-robbing with greater and greater urgency. The setting is the open country at night lighted by "a thin distillation of starlight," and a few dusky interiors, smelly. (How Faulkner can show us that making things out in the dark is a quality of perception as well as a quantity!) In counterpoint is the Square, back in Jefferson, with the Face of its crowd, the immobile, inflexible crowd around which sentience strives and threads and skirts, until the crowd's final whizzing away like a battery of witches on brooms. Even when old man Gowrie gets his Vinson back, brushes the quicksand off and takes him home to bury again tomorrow, is this story going to stop? "This time Hampton and his uncle could go out there tomorrow night and dig him up" is the boy's sleepy valediction that night.

Intruder is marvelously funny. Faulkner's veracity and accuracy about the world around keeps the comic thread from ever being lost or fouled, but that's a simple part of the matter. The complicated and intricate thing is that his stories aren't decked out in humor, but the humor is born in them, as much their blood and bones as the passion and poetry. Put one of his stories into a single factual statement and it's pure outrage—so would life be—too terrifying, too probable and too symbolic too, too funny to bear. There has to be the story, to bear it—wherein that statement, conjured up and implied and demonstrated, not said or the sky would fall on our heads, is yet the living source of his comedy—and a good part of that comedy's adjoining terror, of course.

It doesn't follow that *Intruder*, short, funny, of simple outline, with its detective-story casing, is one of the less difficult of Faulkner's novels. Offering side-by-side variations of numerous words, daringly long, building ever-working sentences (longer than *The Bear*'s, maybe, if anybody is counting), moods and moments arrested, pulled up to peaks, wilfully crowned with beauty and terror and surprise and comedy, Faulkner has at once re-explored his world with his marvelous style that can always search in new ways, and also appeared to use from beginning to end the prerogatives of an impromptu piece of work. It could be that to seem impromptu is an illusion great art can always give as long as profundities of theme, organization, and passionate content can come at a calling, but the art of what other has these cadenzas? Even the witty turns and the perfect neatness of plot look like the marks of a flash inspiration. If

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Intruder did come intruding in a literal way, shaped from the dust into life before the eyes, then we have a special wonder here; but it's none of our business, and the important thing is the wonder, special or not.

Time shifts its particles over a scene now and then, past and future like seasoning from a shaker, and Yoknapatawpha County we know now too, while the new story in its year, month, and ticking hour of day and night, emerges in that illumination and shading which Faulkner supplies to the last inch and the ultimate moment. The political views in *Intruder,* delivered outright as a speech, are made, rightly enough, another such shading to the story.

As in all Faulkner's work, the separate scenes leap up on their own, we progress as if by bonfires lighted on the way, and the essence of each scene takes form before the eyes, a shape in the fire. We see in matchless, "substituteless" (Faulkner's word for swearing) actuality and also by its contained vision: "Miss Habersham's round hat on the exact top of her head such as few people had seen in fifty years and probably no one at any time looking up out of a halfway rifled grave." Every aspect of vision is unique, springs absolute out of the material and the moment, only nominally out of "character" or "point of view," and so we see hats and happenings and every other thing, if not upwards from a half rifled grave, then down the road of the dark shuttered cabins, or up a jail stair, from the lonely ridge where Gowries come; or see in accompaniment with the smell of quicksand (a horse is there to get the smell and rear up), by the light even of impending conflagrations. Old Man Gowrie turning over a body that's the wrong body, not his son's, becomes "only an old man for whom grief was not even a component of his own but merely a temporary phenomenon of his slain son, jerking a strange corpse over onto its back not in appeasement to its one mute indicting cry not for pity not for vengeance not for justice but just to be sure he had the wrong one, crying cheery abashless and loud, 'Yep it's that damned Montgomery damned if it ain't!'" The boy's feverish dream of Miss Habersham trying to drive around the mob to get back to her own house, a vision of How the Old Woman Got Home, is this writer's imagination soaring like the lark.

Of course it's a feat, this novel—a double and delightful feat, because the mystery of the detective-story plot is being ravelled out while the mystery of Faulkner's prose is being spun and woven before our eyes. And with his first novel in eight years, the foremost critics are all giving cries as if (to change the image) to tree it. It's likely that Faulkner's prose can't be satisfactorily analyzed and accounted for, until it can be predicted, God save the day. Faulkner's prose, let's suspect, is intolerantly and intolerably unanalyzable and quite pure, something more than a possum in a tree—with its motes bright-pure and dark-pure falling on us, critics and non-critics alike.

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Encyclopedic Unities

H. M. McLUHAN

VISION IN MOTION, by *L. Moholy-Nagy*. Paul Theobald. $10.00.
MECHANIZATION TAKES COMMAND, by *Siegfried Giedion*. Oxford University Press. $10.00.

THESE TWO WORKS ARE of the utmost relevance alike to the student, the teacher and the critic of literature. For thirty years or more it has been the function of English in high school and university to train the student in the awareness of civilization. But English took over the former functions of Greek and Latin after these had been narrowed to philology. (The murder of classical education was an inside job.) So that the formal teaching of English began and has continued along the lines which first destroyed classical education. The present volumes suggest a variety of means whereby English might in large measure resume the plenary functions of the older classical education.

To the teacher of English Moholy-Nagy and Giedion offer a set of master strategies for the extension and unification of literary with all the other arts and even with the sciences. This sounds Spenglerian, but is fortunately otherwise. For there are two great schools of German encyclopedic study of society and the arts. Riegl, Worringer and Spengler stem from Hegel, while Frobenius, Woelflin, Giedion, and Moholy-Nagy are in the humanist tradition of Burckhardt. For the first school society and the arts are merely the clothes of the time—spirit, or a means of illustrating a system of ideas. For the second, ideas merely serve as a preliminary means to bringing perception and judgment to an ever riper fulfillment by contact with society and the arts. The first school is speculative and dialectically divorced from sensibility. The second carries the tradition of particularist humanism, recognizing the specific diversity of arts and artists as well as the need for careful training of sensibility and taste. The attaining of a contemporary awareness is an easy matter of conceptual adjustment for a Spengler, but for Giedion it is the result of alert and prolonged attention to a great range of things and activities, an affair of thought and feeling working in the completest harmony. And in this respect Giedion is not only superior to Moholy-Nagy but to Woelflin as well. He makes very heavy demands of his readers since he presents ideas not as things to be known or argued about but as tools with which the reader must work for many years.

Giedion once complained to me about the difficulty of getting his thought into English and I suggested that he would find help in the prose of T. S.

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Eliot. He read Eliot with delight and instant understanding, seeing him as a writer who had conquered the same new territory as himself. And for anybody who has worked for years with the tools provided by Eliot, Giedion will make readier sense. For his entire work is an exploration of the causes and effects of the split between thought and feeling as it concerns both plastic and engineering arts. What Eliot has done for the revaluation of English letters from this point of view, Giedion has done for the successes and failures of the past four centuries in the organization of interior and exterior space.

It is this intense preoccupation with contemporary problems of thought and feeling, and with the occasional triumphs of a unified sensibility, that has led Giedion to a study of American life which has been rivalled, and at a different level, only by De Tocqueville. His reason for making a genetic study of American architecture, (*Space, Time and Architecture,* 1939) was the same as that which led him to devote most of the present study to American methods of production and conceptions of comfort and hygiene. Namely, that in America in the nineteenth century the mind was least fettered by the depraved ruling taste which stultified the best insights of European architects and engineers. It was merely an accidental advantage which Americans enjoyed in the nineteenth century, and it was one which was not much exploited. But in facing the problems of machine production this advantage consisted in the American ignorance of traditional crafts and indifference to dominant European standards of prettiness. A persisting shortage of labor in America coincided with the mechanization of production and permitted the best talents a free hand in solving problems the readiest way. The result was often apparent in tools, buildings and objects of novel yet unconscious beauty. So that in the mid-West especially, the untrammeled engineer moved swiftly towards conceptions and objects which not only anticipated their European colleagues but which were in advance of the painters themselves.

It is here that Giedion's rigorous analysis of the specific modalities of vision and apprehension in the arts enables him to produce a triumphant demonstration of the precise function of the arts in a living society. He is able at once to train taste and to fuse it with creative thought in facing the exact conditions in which thought and feeling interact in a particular set of conditions. So that he can say, for example, without fuzziness or impropriety:

> The adulteration of taste, similar to the one that accompanied the mechanizing of bread, was witnessed a century earlier in a quite different field. The ruling artistic taste in the nineteenth century was formed by exploiting certain dormant tastes of the public. The public loves what is sweet, smooth, and outwardly appealing. These desires can be strength-

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> ened, weakened, or diverted into positive channels. The painters of the ruling taste set out to satisfy this public demand more and more. . . . The outcome was a blurring of the instincts in all classes of society, a disorientation that is doing its damage even today.

For the student and teacher of literature the formation of a just taste in bread and books alike is the primary concern. And Giedion offers to him a new set of tools for working not only with the materials of writing and the plastic arts, but with the entire range of daily objects and actions. Central to his procedure is his distinction between "constituent" and "transitory" in facing styles and periods. The one is the incarnation and vehicle of creative force, the other derivative display. But from these conceptions he vigorously excludes the idea of "progress," as alien to valuation in the arts.

The title and theme of his latest work indicate a natural dislike of most current developments as subversive of any conceivable human welfare. So that it is well to notice the exact point at which Giedion draws attention to the motives behind mechanization. His conclusion is that, preceding mechanization, or the need for it, was the universal wish for it:

> The growth of the assembly line with its labor-saving and production-raising measures is closely bound up with the wish for mass-production. We find it used shortly after 1800 for complicated products, such as the manufacture of biscuit in a victualling office of the British Navy, on a purely handicraft basis; *i.e.* without the use of machinery.

That irrational wish continues to manifest itself in an interest in production for its own sake. Human goals were, initially, incidental to this wish. They are now irrelevant to it. So Giedion takes his stand firmly on the conception of human autonomy, ruthlessly and patiently demonstrating where it has been lost and how it can be recovered, granted the wish to recover it.

Moholy-Nagy's *Vision in Motion* is a book to be used only by those who have mastered Eliot and Giedion. Not because it is more advanced but because it is less responsible. The book swarms with brilliant insights into parallel effects and intentions between the most diverse activities of contemporary science, photography, engineering, art and literature. Pictures of "don'ts" for airmen put out by the Army may suddenly illuminate a whole side of Picasso's rhetoric of pathos. A view of obsolescent farm equipment will provide a striking counterpoint to the vision of Léger, intercellular photography suddenly links up with stream of consciousness, and *Finnegans Wake* appears as the encyclopedic filter for old knowledge and new hunches. In short, Moholy-Nagy here presents in compendious form a résumé of the Bauhaus program

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with its superb methods for training the senses and feelings in harmony. But the relations between these and thought are less happily adjusted. Moholy-Nagy being quite often a naif of sensation almost at the Gertrude Stein or Watsonian level of behaviorism. *Vision in Motion,* however, in the hands of a serious teacher would be unsurpassed as a baedeker of contemporary arts, crafts, and engineering seen in a single vortex of interfused interests and activities. In fact, it is quite plain that with such books as these the twentieth century has emerged from the era of isolated specialisms which was begun with the rise of biologism a hundred years ago. For the past thirty years we have been in a new era which is both encyclopedic and unified. The key men of this period, like Joyce and Giedion, exhibit great traditional knowledge together with a universal contemporaneity.

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